

CRYSTAL LIVING METHOD

BRANDON BISHOP



Crystal Living Method

**The Quickest, Simplest System to
Eradicate the Anxiety of Clutter and
Enjoy a Calm, Ordered Life**

by

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Introduction

Thank you for downloading the "***Crystal Living Method: The Quickest, Simplest System to Eradicate the Anxiety of Clutter and Enjoy a Calm, Ordered Life***".

When we clean our homes and declutter, as we say we usually have heaps of "junk" to either get rid of or to put back again in that same familiar spot, the word that rings true for me is simplicity.

I bet as kids we all had junk drawers, I know I did and my mom would come and tell me, hey clean out this drawer, well I could not figure it out, if it was a junk drawer, then "why" did I have to clean it out?

I realized many years ago that when you were cleaning out the junk in the house you live in, you were also cleaning out the junk in the soul, I understood the mechanics behind it, what is outside is in, what is inside is out.

In one of the articles on the Psychology Today's website, Sherrie Bourg Carter explains that "Messy homes and workspaces leave us feeling anxious,

helpless, and overwhelmed. Yet, rarely is clutter recognized as a significant source of stress in our lives.”

Also, an article written by psychologist Audrey Sherman, Ph.D., for Psych Central, says among her patients who suffer from anxiety and depression, feelings of “disorganization and chaos” within their environments in a very common theme, one that is often overlooked.

“Emotional baggage has a way of building up, and then expressing itself in an outward display of turmoil — as if a tornado had let loose in your brain and your surroundings Audrey added.

Whenever I feel the need to clean, I mean a real deep clean to my home; I know inside that I am going through deep changes. If we look back into history and go back over all the ancient prophets, sages, holy men, from all different religions you will see that they were all minimalists they had simplicity figured out.

Some say for instance that our life is dissolved away due to detail others feel our life is wasted due to not having a focus on things. For me, three words came into my vocabulary many years ago truth, simplicity, and love.

I embraced this trinity of words because it worked for me, and it still works, Truth, has many meanings to many people. Truth to me is how I understand this world how it works for me, my truth.

Simplicity; I have understood the concept and have lived with it for many years. Life is a paradox, on one hand, we have simplicity and on the other we have complexity. Being on my journey of life I have realized that I want simplicity in my life.

Simplicity, works for me and from that my life is one of harmony, and flow, my creative juices have more room to flow because I have simplified my life, I write, I read, I enjoy the quaint simple pleasures of living, I don't have a yacht, I don't have many things not because I could not get them, I simply do not want them, I am happy, with the sound of birds, the freshness of a spring morning, simplicity for me is a gift from the spirit.

Inside of this special guide - "***Crystal Living Method: The Quickest, Simplest System to Eradicate the Anxiety of Clutter and Enjoy a Calm, Ordered Life,***" we will look into easy, simple steps and strategies to help you start to experience the peacefulness that comes with decluttering some key areas of your life. It contains the most potent principles to get your life in order.

Meanwhile, you should keep in mind that organizing for the long term involves more than just clearing the clutter, but experiencing some quick victories will most likely motivate you to dig in deeper and create a lifetime of benefits. So, space, save time, save money, and reduce stress by minimalizing your LIFE this year.

Let's get started!

Understanding Minimalism

Most of the great artistic movements can be seen as either an extension of a preceding movement or as a reaction to one. Minimalism falls into both categories. It was a direct and forceful reaction to Expressionism in general and to the raw emotion and anti-intellectualism of Abstract Expressionism in particular.



Minimalism was, however, firmly rooted in one overarching movement of the time and that was Modernism, which had already started a reductive process. It also provided the bridge between Modernism and Post

Modernism. Put simply, it sought to do away with all external references, especially emotional and historical, and to create art that was completely self-contained.

Minimalism first appeared in the 1950's in New York as a subset of Abstract art but became a dominant trend in the 1960's and 1970's. Many sculptors were associated with the movement and pieces featuring large flat planes, industrial finishes and industrial materials were common. Geometry was extremely important as this represented the most pared down representation possible, a form stripped of everything decorative but still retaining its essence. Repetition was also prominent, not only in sculpture but also in two dimensional art and also the other art form that embraced the genre, music. This music tended to consist of repetitive pulses or small groups of notes with changes being very gradual. Writing also had its own drive towards the minimalism. Authors tended to use fewer adverbs and adjectives and didn't describe everything down to the last detail which allowed the reader to fill in the blanks deliberately left by the author.

Minimalism was also hugely influential in design and architecture with traditional Japanese buildings being perhaps the most dominant influence. Design, by its nature, is functional, unlike the fine arts such as music and

painting which by definition have no practical job to do. Architects embraced this with such novel concepts as making a floor double as a radiator and removing internal walls to create multipurpose spaces.

What is a Minimalist Life?

It's one that is stripped of the unnecessary, to make room for that which gives you joy. It's a removal of clutter in all its forms, leaving you with peace and freedom and lightness. A minimalist eschews the mindset of more, of acquiring and consuming and shopping, of bigger is better, of the burden of stuff. A minimalist instead embraces the beauty of less, the aesthetic of spareness, a life of contentedness in what we need and what makes us truly happy. A minimalist realizes that acquiring stuff doesn't make us happy. That earning more and having more are meaningless. That filling your life with busy-ness and freneticism isn't desirable, but something to be avoided.

A minimalist values quality, not quantity, in all forms. I'm a minimalist, and it's something that's deeply satisfying. I wake in the morning in a room that lacks clutter, in the quiet of the early morning, have coffee and read, go out for a run, and then write. Work a little more, spend some time with my

family. These are the things that make me happy. Not buying a lot of things. Not traveling all the time, nor going to parties or spending money on expensive entertainment. Not watching a lot of television and being bombarded with ads. Others might find joy in these things, and I'm not criticizing them. I'm just stating what makes me happy. And that's the key. Figure out what makes you happy. Get rid of the rest, so you have room for those important things. It's not a life of nothing, of boringness. It's a life of richness, in less. Your minimalist life will be different than mine. You'll need to figure out what makes you happiest. Plan your ideal day. Then strip your life of the non-essentials, to make room for this ideal day, for the things and people you love. This book is meant to help you find that path.

Why People Strive Towards Being Minimalist

It is unfortunate that many people strive towards being minimalist, when they actually don't know what a minimalist life really entails. For some minimalist living means living in a desolate state, and yet for others it means luxurious living.

My friend has told me a couple of times that he intends to have additional tableware to fill his empty cupboard. His main concern is not about using

the additional tableware, but rather filling up the cupboard. He being a tidy person, he does not understand how his room gets untidy every time besides cleaning it on a regular basis. Recently he has discovered that he has so much stuff in his room that needs decluttering, but he has made no efforts to do that yet.

It doesn't matter whether you are tidy or not. All you need to do is to have less stuff that you are able to use. Furthermore, I am not saying that becoming a minimalist one has to spend less money, all I am saying is that you can still spend more and buy less stuff of high quality that will last long.

Other than having a lot of stuff, many people lack contentment. Wanting to get quick success won't guarantee the much needed happiness; rather it will continue to make your life even more difficult. Minimalist living involves having enough for that period as long as the basic needs are met. Many people find it hard to be content possibly because they usually compete with other people. Don't sacrifice your sweet life to those material possessions that everyone out there is chasing.

There are scores of people out there who think that minimalist living is only meant for the lowly in the society. For example, many people in the USA strive to win the lottery and some actually win, all in the hope of living

happier lives. In my opinion, this is what the society has made us believe. Ever heard of the saying "education is the key to success?" That is why a number of people are striving to get their children to school in the hope that they will get better lives and possibly help them in future.

The Minimalist Principles

Many people live cluttered lives. They have too many items, most of which they never use. They are obsessed with doing too many things and with doing too much in general. While they're not happy with their lives, they are afraid to make them more simple, they're afraid to try out the minimalist lifestyle, because of the fear it would remove everything worth caring for. The thing is, it won't. Minimalist lifestyle means adding more joy to your life, not taking from it.

Minimalism isn't necessarily all about less. It's also not an end in and of itself. It's a path, to help you to:

- Have more freedom
- Have more time
- Have more room for what's important
- Have less worry

- Have more pleasure
- Be more frugal
- Become greener
- Become healthier

There are some key principles we'll be repeating throughout this book, in various forms. It's important to list them here:

1. **Omit needless things.** Notice this doesn't say to omit everything. Just needless things.
2. **Identify the essential.** What's most important to you? What makes you happy? What will have the highest impact on your life, your career?
3. **Make everything count.** Whatever you do or keep in your life, make it worthy of keeping. Make it really count.
4. **Fill your life with joy.** Don't just empty your life. Put something wonderful in it.
5. **Edit, edit.** Minimalism isn't an end point. It's a constant process of editing, revisiting, editing some more.

In anything you do, see if you can apply these principles. There's no need to get obsessive about it, of course, but it's always useful to examine what we do, how we do it, and whether we really need to do it.

Things to Know About the Minimalist Lifestyle

— **You don't have to give up the well-made items**

The general rule is quality over quantity. For example, if you have three pairs of good quality shoes you actually wear and hundred pairs of uncomfortable, low quality footwear, get rid of the low quality ones. You'll get a lot more space, choosing shoes will become faster and easier, and you'll no longer feel guilty when looking at all those sandals and high heels which looked nice when you bought them, but gave you blisters the one and only time you wore them, or turned out never to be a good match with your outfit.

— **You don't have to give up delicious food, either**

Some minimalists become vegetarians or vegans. Some don't. Minimalism works either way. Some people switch to very simple, basic food. Some keep enjoying complex meals. Again, the minimalist lifestyle works either way. The point is to eat moderate amounts of food, not huge amounts, and not to obsess about preparation. If you enjoy cooking complex meals, by all means, keep doing it! If you'd rather make something simple and tasty than complex and tasty, then that's the best option. Minimalists usually eat naturally and avoid processed food, but that still means delicious meals.

— **There's no need to live like a monk**

While some minimalists do choose to live like monks or Spartans, many don't. Do you enjoy your comfortable furniture? Keep it, then, as long as it doesn't clutter your living space, since the point is to unclutter your life, not to sleep on the floor.

— **Your friends won't hate you**

There are people who are suspicious of everyone who doesn't live the same way they do. That means that they're suspicious of the vast majority of the planet population, since even people in the same country don't all live the same way. However, if you have friends and/or family members who are like that, as soon as they realize you're not trying to force them to change their own lives, they'll accept the change in yours.

— **You don't have to live like (insert a name of a famous minimalist of choice)**

Not all minimalists are the same. Some live on desert islands or in the wilderness. Others live in big cities like New York or London, and, yes, have jobs and cars, live in big apartments or houses, have big families... The

purpose of the minimalist lifestyle is to find a simple way of life which suits your needs and your life choices, not somebody else's.

Minimalist lifestyle isn't scary or exotic. It is a way of life in which you own only things you really need and use, do things which actually need to be done, and therefore free the time, space and energy for what is truly important for you.

Declutter Your Life, Change Your World

Decluttering your life and instilling order and harmony in your home are two of the most amazing things you can do for yourself and your loved ones! The after effects of decluttering are amazing. You feel emotionally rejuvenated and your spirits are lifted to greater heights. This is one of the reasons why you've got to master how to declutter your life.

Everyone can attest to how inconvenient and annoying it is when you can't find something and turn the house upside down just trying to find it. Unless we are one of the privileged few who are incredibly organized and have never lost anything.

This is rather interesting. You look at the neighborhood and you see people living their daily lives. Now out of the many friends that you have, there are surely those that have a clutter-filled home and yet they don't care. They go shopping, have fun, and neglect their clutter-filled home. It is as if they're clutter-immune. So if this is the case, why do we do what we do? Why do we go on this never-ending cycle of decluttering one's home and life?

Clutters if not managed will accumulate. Some say clutters are like magical things, no matter how hard you try to declutter, and they keep coming back again. But it is not really magical. When you buy something, either a kitchen gadget or a kitchen utensil, you go "ooh" and "ah" over it. Pretty soon, you'll need to replace it to catch up with the times and the need of your kitchen. If you don't maintain your momentum, the clutters (the gadgets, boxes, and the likes) will catch up with you and swallow you up! The clutters will literally rule you. You take one look at your kitchen; see the godly mess that exists and you will instantly feel all those unhealthy toxins build up within your body.

Now, going back to my friends who live life in the fast lane and neglect the benefits of decluttering. I would never follow them. I'd rather focus on a

clutter-free household and live a life that's free from clutters. But hey, I never said that having fun is a bad thing. But everything starts with one's home. Before you go out and have fun, declutter your life first.

Slow and Steady Equals Progress

Life is too busy. Life is complicated. Life is full of obstacles... If I had a penny for each time I've heard these statements, I would be a millionaire. Granted, I too have at one point or another complained about the complexities of life and how busy I often am. Truth is that we tend to over commit ourselves. At the end of the day we are frequently tired and exhausted and with little to no energy to do something for ourselves.



This chapter talks about simplifying your life and what I have I learned prompted me to think about my own life and schedule. Work-life balance and simplifying lifestyles in order to enjoy more of what we want, is repeatedly, one of the subjects of my coaching conversations.

Simplifying Your Lifestyle

Living a minimalist life isn't just about eliminating physical clutter. It's about reducing the clutter of your busy schedule, your work life, all the running around you might normally do.

It's about doing only what's necessary, so you have time for what makes you truly happy.

Reduce Commitments

The most important thing you can do to simplify your schedule is to list all your commitments, and pick the most important ones. Commitments include everything that takes up your time, from work projects to side jobs to serving on civic committees to coaching for your kids' soccer team to renovating your home to serving on a PTO or other school committee.

These commitments are easy to say "yes" to, but they fill up our lives as they accumulate, until we're so busy we have no time for what's really important to us. Minimalism suggests we reduce these commitment to just the most important, leaving room in our lives for what we love most and leaving space so we're not as stressed out.

To do this, make a list of every commitment you can think of. Anything you do on a regular basis, or that you've committed to doing in the near term or long term.

Now take note of this list: what are the 4-5 most important commitments? The things you love most, that are most valuable to you. These are your top priorities. Everything else should be removed, if at all possible.

To remove commitments, you need to make a phone call or send an email informing people that you can no longer commit to something. This is difficult and uncomfortable, because it means saying "no" to people, and often disappointing them. But you know what? They'll live, and their projects and lives will go on. While it's difficult to disappoint people, it's rarely as bad as we fear.

This is a slow process of removal -- there will be some commitments you can't get out of right away. But if you keep in mind that you want to eventually get rid of all non-essential commitments, you'll slowly get out of them, either by saying "no" or when the commitments are finished naturally.

It's important, from this point on, to try to say "no" to all requests for commitments if they're not on your essential list -- things you really love doing. You should want to say "Hell yes" to new commitments -- or say no. Don't just say yes. Once you've gotten rid of non-essential commitments, your life will be freed to do the things you've always wanted to do.

Clear Your Schedule

See how clear you can make your schedule. This means cutting back on meetings, which are often a waste of time anyway. It means not making appointments if you can avoid it. It means leaving big blocks of time available for creating, for doing the work you love, for doing other things you love.

Leave space between things in your schedule. The space helps you to go through your schedule with less stress, and if things run long, it won't throw everything off.

If you can, leave entire days without scheduled appointments. That doesn't mean you won't do any work -- it just means nothing is hard-coded into your calendar.

Cut Back On Your To-Do List

If you have a long to-do list filled with lots of things to do, the minimalist way is to simplify the list.

To do this, you must be honest with yourself: can you really do all the things on your todo list today? How about in the next three days? Often we believe we can do more than we actually can, and as a result we make long todo lists that we could never do in a day or three.

Now, it's the nature of to-do lists to be neverending, but the real problem is that they're filled with lots of tasks that keep us super busy. And instead, we should be focusing on fewer tasks, not more.

Fewer tasks means we're less busy. It also means that we must select the most important ones the tasks that will have the highest impact on our work and our lives.

Choose three tasks for each day -- really important, high-impact tasks. These three Most Important Tasks (MITs) should be your focus each day, and ideally you should do them before working on any tasks of lower importance.

Do the important stuff first. Worry about the little things later.

Ensuring That You Never Lose A Single Item

For instance, if you're cleaning out your closet you are going to take out all of your clothes. That includes getting everything out of your coat closet, storage, and anywhere else you have tucked away any clothes in your home.

For some categories, this method can feel overwhelming, as we might not even know where every office supply in the house is being stored. In many cases, part of the reason we have so much clutter is that we don't realize how much we own. On average, our homes are larger than they used to be and thus there are more spaces to spread out our belongings.

We end up with duplicates and forgotten items when they are stored in a variety of places. Bringing everything together at once to go through and assess what stays and what goes is both eye-opening and enlightening. This is an important part of the process so you can accurately select what you want to keep or let go of.

Getting everything out when working in a closet, garage, or storage area is beneficial. It's easy to leave boxes that haven't been touched in years and continue to do so. Likewise, you could assume everything on a shelf is being used unless you take the time and effort to take everything down and look through it. Forcing yourself to take everything out means you have to make decisions.

Grouping the items by type and gathering it all together can be useful as well. It allows you to see the amount that you have and eliminate duplicates. Seeing the total amount of something that you own is also a reality check and can help solidify your decluttering goals.

I'm also an advocate for giving everything a home. One of the causes of clutter is not knowing where an item belongs. If you assign it to a particular space, then you always know where it belongs.

A Simple Repeatable Decluttering System

Clutter is poison to a minimalist. The minimalist will toss out the unnecessary and be left with sparse beauty. Out with the old, and in the with new – it's a saying that's particularly relevant at the turn of the year, and for many of us, this means having a home or workplace clear-out to create a calm and clutter-free space.



Whether it's an overflowing wardrobe, disorderly kitchen or messy living room that's getting on your nerves, now is a great time to tackle the clutter,

donating unwanted items to charity shops and deciding what you really need, and what you're holding onto unnecessarily.

However, decluttering your home isn't easy – often we lose the mental and physical energy required halfway through the process, and end up shoving a whole load of junk back into our cupboards rather than dealing with it thoroughly.

The problems with clutter:

- stuff weighs you down
- stuff stresses you out
- stuff is expensive, to buy, store and maintain
- looking for stuff in clutter leads to wasted time
- clutter is a reflection of your internal state

You accumulate clutter by being in the mindset of Acquiring rather than a mindset of Enough. You accumulate it by having a fear mentality, not wanting to let go of things, wanting to hoard and keep everything for sentimental reasons.

Being too busy also leads to clutter, because we don't have time to clean up, don't have time to get rid of the unnecessary, and clutter will pile up. So reducing what you do will help clear clutter.

Not having a system for dealing with stuff, and not having the habits to keep the system going, will lead to clutter. You can declutter your home and get it looking beautiful, but if you don't have a system and habits in place, you'll soon start putting things down in any old place, and soon will have clutter again.

The solution is to find a place for everything, once you've done some decluttering. This isn't too hard -- you just need to put something in a place you think is a good "home" for that thing, and then make a mental note of that place. Then you need to get into the habit of putting that thing in its place whenever you're done with it. It takes more time to form that habit, but it's not too difficult if you do it consciously.

Beating the Fear Mentality

So if you're afraid to let go of stuff, how do you conquer that fear in order to declutter?

There are a few related fears or emotions related to keeping stuff:

- Fear of needing it again
- Reluctance to waste something valuable
- Not wanting to let go of sentimental things, because of emotional connection

These are all strong emotions and if they're not addressed, will stop you from decluttering. Here's how to beat them:

1. If you haven't used it in 6 months, toss it

For seasonal items such as winter clothes, extend the rule to 12 months or so. If you don't use it, you don't need it. But what if some occasion comes up where you do need it? Well, that's not likely, but ask yourself what you could do in such an event -- could you use something else instead, or borrow it from someone else, rent it, or in a worst-case scenario, buy another one (preferably used)? Usually, we can do without it or find another solution, and usually, such a scenario doesn't happen -- as evidenced by not using it for the last 6 months. Sometimes it does, but it's not the end of the world.

2. It's wasteful to hold on to things

While I know many people who feel it's wasteful to get rid of things that can still be used -- and part of me strongly agrees with that -- this belief leads to the accumulation of incredible amounts of junk and clutter. I know because I've seen all their clutter. It's not pretty. Instead, realize that it's actually more wasteful to hold on to things if you don't use and love them. First, they waste space, which actually costs you money each month (in the form of rent or mortgage of your home, or renting or buying additional storage space). It also costs you time to maintain all of the clutter, and stress in maintaining it and see it and going through all of it to find things. Finally, if these things are actually still usable and valuable, give them to someone else who can and will use them. Things aren't valuable if they're not used. So by holding onto things, you are preventing them from actually being used by someone who needs them.

3. Take a picture

If things have sentimental value, it's because of the memories they hold, not because of what they actually are or what they can be used for. So take a digital picture, or if it's a picture or document, scan it into your computer. You'll still have the memories, but they'll take up no space. Try this, for at

least a few things, and you'll see that the sentimental value of things can be moved into the digital space to defeat this fear.

4. The "maybe" box

If you just can't bring yourself to get rid of things, have a "maybe" box when you declutter. This is a box for all the things you're on the fence about -- put them into a box, mark the date, and put the box into a closet or other storage. After 6 months, if you never needed these items, get rid of them. This is a stopgap measure designed to overcome these fears.

How to Get Started

Getting started tackling a house full of clutter can be difficult because the task is too overwhelming. It's important, then, to start small. You don't need to take on the mountain. Just start with one rock at a time. The Fly Lady recommends starting with your kitchen sink, and I agree with that. Clear out your sink (wash any dishes), clean it well, and get it nice and shiny. This is something you can do in 5-10 minutes (depending on how many dishes there are), and it has a motivating effect.

Now keep this sink clean and shiny. From here, you can expand: clear your kitchen counters, and wipe them clean. Clear your kitchen floors of clutter. Keep these areas clean for a few days.

Expand to other rooms -- table tops, then floors, then shelves, then closets. One surface "We don't need to increase our goods nearly as much as we need to scale down our wants. Not wanting something is as good as possessing it." - Donald Horban. But keep the sink clean, and any areas you've already decluttered and cleaned, keep them clean.

You don't need to tackle all of this overnight. You can do it a little at a time – 10-15 minutes a day, or more if you like. If you want, you can schedule a weekend of decluttering, but it's not necessary. Gradually, you'll get there.

Decluttering System

Here are brief steps for decluttering:

1. **Start with one flat surface at a time.** This can be a countertop, a tabletop, a section of the floor in a room, a shelf, the floor of a closet,

a cabinet. Just focus on one shelf in a closet at a time, for example, not the whole closet.

2. **Take everything off the surface** (or out of the drawer or cabinet). Put it all into one big pile. You don't literally have to pile things -- just put them all together, maybe on a table or on the floor, but not on the table or floor you're decluttering. This will be your temporary workspace.
3. **Take one thing off the pile, and make a quick decision with it:** do you love and use this regularly? Have you used it in the last 6 months? If so, put it in a separate "keep" pile. If not, put it in a "donate" box, or trash or recycle bag if it's actually trash. You can have a third option of a "maybe" box for items you can't decide on -- see the previous section of this chapter for more on that.
4. **Repeat this process with every item in the pile, one at a time,** making quick decisions with each item, until you're done. If you make quick decisions, it doesn't have to take long. You should now have two piles -- a "keep" pile, and a donate box, plus a trash bag. Perhaps also the "maybe" box if you go that route.

5. **Now clean the surface, shelf, cabinet.** Then put back the "keep" pile, neatly and sorted. Put spaces in between stuff. Find other homes for things that don't really belong here.
6. **Put the donate box into your car to be dropped off tomorrow.** Throw out the trash. Put the maybe box, if you used it, into storage. You're done!

Repeat this process for other flat surfaces.

What to Do with Unneeded Stuff

You don't need to actually throw things in the trash when you declutter. There are many options for getting rid of things you don't need or love. Here are a few:

- Donate to Goodwill or other such charities
- Freecycle.org - a site for giving away things to people who need them, in your area
- Have a yard sale * Sell your stuff on Ebay.com (tip: put your CDs in bundles and sell them)

- Give things to friends and family who need them
- Donate DVDs and books to the library
- Sell books to used bookshops
- Recycle
- Make something out of the items, and give it as a gift

Decluttering Tips for Pack Rats

It's very easy to assume that anyone who lives in a decluttered, organized house was born organized and always lived clutter free. However, some of the most organized people I have known started out as disorganized pack rats.

I'm also a former pack rat. People I've met in the past few years are often surprised to find out that my space used to always be very cluttered and disorganized. Because I work to live clutter free, I know that if you set your mind to getting rid of your own clutter, you can.

If you're a pack rat looking to put some order to your house, these tips can help the process along:

1. Start Small

Decluttering a house is hard. Decluttering a room is easier. Decluttering a desk is even easier. Divide the space you need to declutter into smaller and smaller sections until you can look at a section and say, "I can tackle this!" Work on this space, then move to the next.

2. Track Your Progress

Take a camera and snap a few pictures of your space before you start. When you finish decluttering a section, snap another picture of that area. When you compare the pictures, you'll be able to see the decluttering progress that you've made.

3. Get Rid of the Obvious Trash First

The first thing you should do when you declutter is take a trash bag and get rid of the obvious trash. Junk mail, packaging, last week's shopping list - trash them. You will instantly see some progress in your decluttering project.

4. Start With the Noticeable, Then Move To the Hidden

It is easy for pack rats to start emptying out all of the dark corners and hidden spaces when they declutter. However, if you already have clutter sitting out in view, this only adds to what you need to work on to have a visibly decluttered space. Start with what you can see. Then tackle your hidden clutter zones one at a time.

5. Keep Fewer Multiples

Do you really need six travel cups and four weeks' worth of socks? Much of the extra unused stuff in our lives is easily obtainable again if we find that we need it in the future. If you have more of something than you use, thin it out until you only have what you actively use.

6. Just Start

It's easy to get involved in planning your entire course of action for decluttering your home, but if you spend all of your time planning and don't get rid of stuff, you will be no better off than before you decided to take the decluttering plunge. Start now by finding five things you don't want to keep, or by clearing the junk mail off of your desk. Doing something small is better than doing absolutely nothing.

There are also a couple of things that you can do to help you keep your space decluttered over time. These tips take some dedication, but will help you long-term.

7. Don't Try to Change Overnight

You didn't become a pack rat in a day -- it was a habit that you built up over time. So, for long-term results, don't worry about trying to change yourself in a day or week. Work on finding and changing the little habits that all contribute to your pack rat nature. If you work on changing your habits one at a time, your progress will be more sustainable.

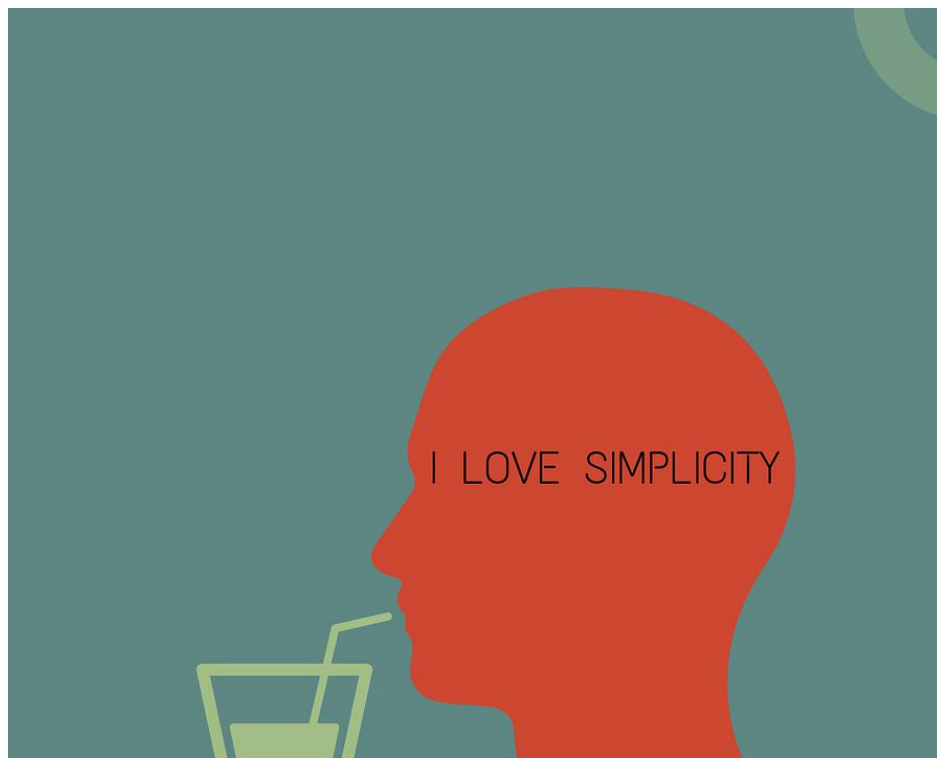
8. Learn About Your Buying Habits

A decluttered space is energizing, but if you are still following your old clutter-building ways, that space will fill up before long. Pay attention to the reasons why you buy things. Do you buy new things to cheer you up? Or do you feel a thrill when you find a new yard sale gem? I used to compulsively browse through craft stores and used book stores when I felt bored. Learning why you buy and keep things will make you more aware when you're about to buy something that will quickly turn to clutter in your newly decluttered space.

When you're a pack rat, decluttering your house may seem too big or too involved of a task. But if you break the process up into sections and learn a few things about yourself, you can not only get rid of the clutter, but keep it away.

Becoming a Minimalist

Anyone can choose a minimalist lifestyle. And the good news is that for once being stone broke has its advantages. Why? Because you are starting from the top so to speak. Choices you might have had with too much money in the bank, are irrelevant. Decisions about the quality of your life, are laid out to the simplicity or complexity of your imagination.



What you desire or what you think you need, changes when there is very little money in your back account. The reality of being economically disadvantaged has its good points. In fact, living a lifestyle without the stress of consumer spending is actually a freedom of sorts.

Some of the advantages of living a minimalist lifestyle are that our thoughts are no longer overloaded with paying attention to the latest fashion, or newest cell phone. We look at our lives differently. We learn what it is we really value in our world. We focus more on our relationships, and because of that, we give more of ourselves to them.

When your time is not consumed with spending money on consumer crap, you will utilize your time more to focus on pursuing your passion. Defining your goals without distraction of materialistic urges that are an illusion to your happiness.

You take back control over your life. You realize what it is that you really need to be happy. You learn to cook your meals with forethought, you learn the wonder of reading again. You can get back to the basics of fun, just like when you were a kid, by riding a bike, hiking, camping, or board and card games.

Conversations with your partner become different. It's proven that couples arguing over finances is on the top ten lists of why relationships fail. When you owe on five different credit cards, coupled with car payments and rent or mortgage payments, and your thought process is keeping up with appearances around your friends, what else could you expect but stress?

Why Bother with Becoming a Minimalist?

Psychological studies have shown that people get lasting happiness not from their possessions but from their experiences. The person who wants that new toy isn't the same person who gets it. Once you get, experience, or achieve anything, you are only momentarily happy but eventually return to your base line of happiness. This is a proven psychological fact. However, experiences can condition whether your happiness baseline moves up or down.

The \$500 iPad won't ever likely increase your baseline of well being. But hiring a personal trainer or taking a vacation for that same \$500 probably will lead to long term happiness. After all, there's no investment besides money in buying items. But experiences require an investment in time, energy, and focus. In the process, you're changed as well.

Becoming a minimalist also doesn't mean you hate or give away all your possessions.

No, it means focusing on what you truly need and want. It means only buying quality items. For example, an average shopper may buy anything that is on discount and end up with a closet full of bad fitting and never used articles of clothing. A stylish, minimalist will be willing to buy that expensive because he knows he will get years of use out of it. Less junk, more quality.

How to Become a Minimalist

While minimalist aesthetics and products and the minimalist lifestyle appeals to a lot of people, they find it easier to like it than to live it. Minimalism is something people might strive for, but they don't know where to start. There are lots of things to do, to think about, and it can be overwhelming. Here's where I'd start:

Start by realizing you already have enough. We'll look more into this in the next chapter, but this is really key. Being content with what you have is important, or all the decluttering in the world won't matter, because you'll just want more.

Start cutting back on clutter and possessions. We'll get into this asap, but really if you have a home or office full of clutter, you're not minimalist yet. We want to get rid of this clutter, and it can be done in a weekend or two, or it can be done slowly over the course of weeks. Either is fine, but the key is to start simplifying your schedule. Cut back on commitments, take the unnecessary stuff out of your schedule, and leave some breathing room. Allow yourself to focus on the important stuff. * Slowly edit everything you do, with minimalist principles in mind. It's a constant process. That's it. It's pretty simple. We'll go into more depth, of course, covering eating and fitness and finances and family and all of that. But at the core of things, to become a minimalist, all you need to do is the four things above

Learn to be Satisfied

This is really the starting place. It's not enough to just strip things bare, because clutter will eventually accumulate if you continue to acquire things. And at the root of the desire to acquire is a discontentedness with how things are now. If you're buying things you don't need, it's because you're dissatisfied in some way. You want more, not just what you have now. You want more excitement, fun, ways to make your life better. You want something cooler. Whatever the reason, you're not happy with what you

have. It's a problem that can go pretty deep, but the solution doesn't have to be complicated. Here's what I suggest:

1. **Realize you already have all you really need.** What are the things you truly need? Food, water, basic clothing, shelter, loved ones. Everything else is extra. You don't need the latest technology, stylish clothing, cool new shoes, a fancy car, a big house.
2. **Learn to stop buying non-necessities.** This might sound difficult, but it's a matter of being conscious of it. One great method is to start a 30-day list -- make it a rule that if you want to buy a non-necessity, you have to put it on this list (with the date it was added) and you can't buy it for at least 30 days. If you still want it after 30 days, you can buy it. This usually works, because the urge to buy dissipates. Always ask before buying: Is this an absolute necessity?
3. **Learn to be happy by doing, not owning.** We can be happy with just the true necessities, if we learn that owning things, having things, does not make us happy. Instead, doing things can make us happy -- talking with a friend, taking a walk with a loved one, cooking, creating, singing, running, working on something exciting. If you can focus on doing things that make you happy, you'll have less of a need for stuff.

4. **Learn the concept of Enough.** This is the idea that we don't always need more -- that once we reach a certain point, we have enough. The key is to learn to recognize when that is. Often we don't realize we have enough, and are caught up in the cycle of more.

Having more breeds wanting more. It's an endless cycle of more, an addiction to acquiring and owning. We need to learn when enough is enough, and be happy with what we have. This doesn't happen overnight. It takes time, but most importantly it takes a consciousness of all of this -- of necessities vs. wants, of more vs. enough, of being happy by doing not owning. Over time, this consciousness will result in a contentedness with what we already have, which is a true foundation for a minimalist life.

Rethinking necessities

One of the basics of minimalism is that you eliminate as many non-necessities as you can, to make room for what's important.

If you don't need a ton of clothing, you get rid of much of it. If you don't need that new gadget, you don't buy it. Within reason, of course.

You learn to be content with what you already have, with the necessities, with doing things you love rather than having things.

But it's funny, because often things we assume are necessities are not necessarily so. The problem is that we categorize things as necessities because we're used to them, and we can't see how to live without them. And it's difficult to make big changes.

Some examples:

— **A car.** Cars are seen as necessities, but amazingly, people lived without them for quite awhile before the 20th century. Even today, some people manage to go carless. And it's not impossible — especially if you live in a place with a decent public transportation system. And there are car sharing options now in many cities, so you can use a car when you need it, for much less than actually owning a car. It's possible to bike and walk most places, and take public transit and shared cars everywhere else.

— **Lots of clothes.** While I don't advocate going naked (though some do it) nor do I recommend just owning one outfit, it is possible to own less clothing than most people have. We don't need to constantly buy

clothes to stay fashionable — we can buy quality, timeless clothing, with colors and patterns chosen so that all our clothes go with each other.

— ***A big house***. Have less stuff, you need less house.

These are just a few examples — think about all the things you consider necessities. Are they really? What's really needed, beyond food, shelter, basic clothing, and loved ones?

Happiness Ignition

Decide what items to keep and what items to let go off is often a bittersweet experience that can stir a lot of emotions. On one end, you are embracing change and trying something new and on the other, you are packing up a period of time. For many people, deciding what items to keep and what items to let go off is a chance to go through one's collected home life and hold solo-debates about the value and worth of an object. In this chapter, we will discuss quickest, easiest trick to decide what items to keep and what items to let go off.



Schedule Your Organization Phases And Over Time

Consider taking the 3 weekends before you need to pack to get organized. Phase 1 can be going through your things and deciding what to keep, phase 2 can be deciding about the maybe items and phase 3 can be preparing to pack. By giving yourself time and space to decide what you have and what you want will make the entire process easier.

Think About The Product's Worth

If you haven't used the item, product or piece in well over a year then consider letting it go. Storing things year after year in a closet may not be worth it to you, creating storage issues and clutter. Really think about the product's worth. i.e. is it worth it to you to have potential storage issues or will you use the piece?

Open the Box of Stuff

The box of stuff that you lug around from apartment to apartment but never really open before; Open it, go through it and decide if you need anything in there. If not, let it go.

Let Go of the Pieces of Furniture that Doesn't Fit Anymore

Consider letting go of the pieces of furniture that wouldn't just fit. If you keep it, all you are doing is creating storage issues and that may get frustrating. Maybe you can lend the piece to a friend for a year or so (hey, free storage and a win-win for you and your friend!) or donate it and get a new lovely piece that will fit.

If the piece or item is a family heirloom but not really your style, still keep it. Maybe you can update the piece to make it feel fresh while keeping the integrity of it. Ask your family what they think and enjoy a little DIY in your new space.

A List of Items You Should Get Rid of

Ready to start going through your stuff and understanding what items to get rid of when you declutter? Then read on!...

- Anything you have a duplicate of
- Anything that you didn't remember was there!
- Anything in your home that is broken or you look at and don't like
- Anything that makes you feel sad or guilty when you look at it

- Anything that you can get the same information easily again online
- Anything that doesn't work as well as it should (bedding that doesn't quite fit etc...)
- Anything in your car (including the boot) that isn't vital (so easy to forget it's there!)
- Anything waiting to be returned to family/friends etc...
- Anything waiting to go to the tip – make a few journeys and free up the space
- Any old credit cards/debit cards/loyalty cards in your purse that you no longer need/use (cut up to ensure you can dispose of securely)
- Out of date vouchers and deals information you have been keeping
- Most manuals for items you buy (you can find all the info online)
- Scraps of wrapping paper that won't wrap anything!
- Greetings cards from past events (keep only those that are truly sentimental)
- Books and magazines you've never read and won't ever read or you have read and have no intention of reading again
- Educational notes etc... from prior qualifications (you have the qualification now! I need to let go of my uni notes.....)

- Clothes that don't fit and spare buttons from clothes that you are keeping "just in case"
- Baby items if you have finished having babies and your family is complete
- Clothes that don't suit your style any longer
- Any earrings that don't have their partner
- Any shoes that don't have their partner
- Ornaments that you are sick of dusting!
- Shoes that hurt when you wear them
- Hair products you used to use when your style was different
- Sports bras that have lost their hold!
- Socks with holes in the toes
- Tights with ladders
- Any clothes that don't flatter your shape
- Old bedding in the bottom of your linen cupboard that you never use
- Chipped or cracked crockery
- Artwork that doesn't make you happy
- Half finished craft projects that are never going to be completed
- Pens that don't work any longer

- 90% of what's in the loft! (most of which you will have forgotten about!)
- Toiletries you will never use (e.g hand cream/foot cream etc... from a set you got at Christmas)
- Chargers for phones you no longer own
- Kitchen gadgets you never use (ice cream maker was one I had and never used!)
- Large items that take up too much room and could be borrowed if you ever need again
- Any plastic carrier bags you are stockpiling (20 is probably plenty!)
- Out of date food in the cupboards
- Any mugs over the total number of people you would ever have drinking in your home in one go
- Any glasses over the total number of people you would ever have drinking in your home in one go
- Anything that is past it's best in the freezer
- Herbs and spices you never use
- Specialist tea/coffee you never drink
- Out of date medicines
- Items related to hobbies you don't do any longer

- Paint for rooms that you have since redecorated a different colour
- Memorabilia that doesn't hold the same value for you any longer
- Projects you have been meaning to get around to for years but haven't
- Toys no longer played with
- All the unneeded bits of paper/receipts etc.. in your purse and handbag
- Receipts from items you have kept and used (unless it's the guarantee or you need to keep for accounting reasons)
- DVDs you have watched and won't watch again
- CDs you don't listen to any longer
- Games/jigsaws where some of the pieces are missing
- Computer games that the children have grown out of (get them swapped at games stores for something that they will use instead)
- Old computers (take care to destroy the hard drive first)
- Boxes from electronic items you have bought
- Anything recorded on your TV that you have been meaning to watch but haven't for months (you aren't likely to after that amount of time)
- Recipe books you don't use (you can easily find recipes online)

- Bad photos you have had developed that you will never want to frame or put in an album
- Cushions/pillows that have lost their plumpness (TIP – If you love the cushion then you could re-fill with a feather insert which will give it new life)
- Any junk mail / old paperwork that is piling up
- VHS tapes and audio cassettes if you haven't anything to play them on
- Excess loose change – gather it up and get it to the bank
- Dead plants/flowers
- Old nail varnish / nail varnish in a colour you don't wear any longer
- Excess furniture (clear the room a bit and let it all breathe!)
- Out of date newspapers
- Used candles where the wick has worn down and can't be lit again
- Take away menus for places you never eat at
- Broken or unsightly garden ornaments
- Any clothes that no longer look their best – either worn out or misshaped
- Any tupperware or plastic storage containers with missing lids
- People in your life that make you unhappy to be around

- Items in your diary that you don't enjoy doing and could say NO to
- Outside furniture that has faded, broken, or is past its best
- Food in cupboards that you and the family don't like and won't eat
- Old calendars and diaries (unless you need to keep for accounting reasons)
- Everything in your junk and spam email folders
- Accessories that you don't wear
- Excess coat hangers (especially the wire ones as they don't do your clothes any good)
- Cuddly toys no longer loved
- Excess serving dishes in the kitchen – think about the biggest party you've had and what you actually used
- Digital photos on your phone or computer that aren't any good – blurred etc...
- Rusted/tangled jewellery beyond repair
- Excess baking trays / saucepans etc... in the kitchen
- Sports equipment no longer used or that is broken
- Everything in your bins! (totally clean slate!)
- Childrens outside play equipment that is faded, broken or past its best

- Bottles of alcohol that have only a tiny bit left in them
- Anything lurking at the bottom of your handbag!
- Your mind – take some time out to clear your head a little each day
- Kids artwork (take photos or scan instead so you still have copies but less bulk) – only keep really special ones
- Any decorating / DIY supplies that you don't require in your home (fixtures that you have since removed, old wallpaper etc...)

And that's all! If you're a little overwhelmed by the list, then why not print off a copy (it's free), and get through it a bit at a time at your own pace?

Getting Your Family Involved

Often, one of the pitfalls for decluttering is the buy-in of your family members. How to get all of them involved (Yes, even the kids) so more hands make light work.

Here are things to know about getting your family on board with minimalism.



Be Mindful Of Your Approach

First and foremost, I think the most important thing is to be mindful of your approach. Minimalism (or any new idea) is going to be better received if your family member feels like they're part of the decision making process. If you come across as an "expert" trying to show them the error of their ways, they might feel like their current lifestyle is under attack.

For example, you might think that a good way to get your husband involved is to show him some statistics about clutter. After all, when you heard them, you felt shocked and motivated to own less—surely he'll feel the same after hearing them too?

Well maybe ... or maybe not. Of course, everyone will respond differently but I think that statistics or "memes" about minimalism are probably most motivating once you're already open to the idea. If not, it might feel like a passive-aggressive attack.

It reminds me of the saying "You're either part of the solution or you're part of the problem"; it sounds good in theory—but is telling someone they're part of the problem really the best way to get them involved?

Again, I know everyone will respond differently, but I think shaming someone into change is rarely a good motivator (even if it's unintentional) and you often risk making them more resistant to change in the long term (especially if they're a bit stubborn!).

Appeal To Their Values

So how should you approach minimalism with your family? By appealing to their values first.

After all, remember that minimalism isn't really about decluttering or how much stuff you own; instead, it's about making space in your life for the things you value most—so this is where the conversation should begin.

For example, let's say your husband and son are huge football fans. Perhaps you could approach the topic of minimalism from this angle?

- I know you love going to the games ... maybe if we bought less of X and Y, we could find the money for you to buy season tickets?
- Wow, another Saturday spent doing tasks around the house ... maybe if we decluttered some of our stuff, you'd have more time to play football in the yard?

Of course, this is just one example and it might not be realistic for you but the idea is to paint a picture of what “experiences over things” might look like in their life. Put yourself into their shoes and think about how minimalism will benefit them specifically.

- Perhaps your husband hates his long commute; if you had less stuff, could you move closer to his work?
- Do you kids hate chores? (Probably, haha!) Be specific about what chores they could give up or less often in a decluttered home.
- Does your husband like entertaining? If your home had less stuff, could you invite friends over more often?

Be creative and think outside the box about what motivates your family members—and if you find this challenging, be direct and talk to them. Ask them what they would do if they had more time, money, energy and space in their lives? Find out their pain points and then connect the dots; how can minimalism make their lives better?

Share Your Why

Your family members love you and odds are, they will be more receptive to minimalism (or any lifestyle change) if they know why it matters to you.

Sharing your “why” will help them see that minimalism is not just some random idea you’ve come up with on a whim but instead, a powerful tool to improve your life (and theirs too).

If you’re not clear about your own motivations, repeat the above conversation with yourself. Get specific about how minimalism will make your life better; this will help you communicate your “why” to your family AND it will empower you during the decluttering process.

Declutter “Neutral” Areas (With Permission)

Once you’ve done the above, I think it’s a good idea to start by decluttering a “neutral” area (a place where the stuff doesn’t really belong to any one person, like the medicine cabinet). But before you begin, there’s one important thing you should do:

Ask your family members for permission.

A simple “Do you mind if I declutter [chosen space]?” should suffice and, if you’ve chosen a neutral space, there shouldn’t have too many objections.

There are a few benefits of doing this:

- By asking your family, you're including them in the process and giving them ownership over the end results. Even if it's a small project, you can celebrate the success together. ("Wow, look how much easier it is to find what we need. I'm so glad we did this.") Hopefully, they'll remember this feeling and want to replicate it on a bigger scale.
- Ok ... this is a bit sneaky but it's a trick I was taught when I used to work in sales. It's sometimes known as a "yes ladder" and the basic concept is this: if you get a "yes" to a small request (like the medicine cabinet), you're more likely to get a "yes" to a bigger request later (like the living room). It's not foolproof but there is some science to back it up! 😊
- Finally, asking your family for permission shows that you respect their opinion and this is important because trust is essential for decluttering. People are often resistant to minimalism because they're afraid their things will be taken from them and instinctively, this makes them hold onto everything tighter. But when you build trust and your family members feel confident, they become empowered to let go of their own accord. (So on that note, make sure you never declutter something that doesn't belong to you without permission!)

When All Else Fails ... Look Inwards

I think it's important to acknowledge that ultimately, you can't make anyone change if they don't want to. Minimalism might be important to you but at the end of the day, your family might not be interested and that's ok. You might not get the fully decluttered home of your dreams but this doesn't mean you can't benefit from minimalism.

Start with the spaces you can control and then learn from the experience—because decluttering is an introduction to intentional living. The same questions you ask about your physical stuff (“What value does this add to my life?”) can be applied to other areas of your life such as your relationships, your spending, and most importantly—your time!

Turn your attention inward and don't get caught up worrying about clutter that's outside your control. This is actually part of minimalism too: learning to invest your time and energy into things you can change and letting go of things you can't.

Honestly, it might be very hard to embrace minimalism without the support of your family. However, you have to stay focused on yourself and you never know; as you start to reap the benefits of minimalism, your family

might notice and come to you in their own time. And if they don't? That's okay too.

Minimalist Home

I try to keep my home relatively uncluttered -- not completely empty or sparse, but not cluttered at all. For example, on the floor of my kitchen/dining room area are just a few essentials: dining table (clear of any clutter), chairs. On the counter is only the coffee maker.



In my living room is only a pair of couches, a TV stand, a side table, a lamp, and my computer desk and chair. The desk has only my iMac and keyboard, with no paper files or other clutter. I don't see this kind of minimalist home as devoid of character and fun and life -- instead, I get a kind of fulfillment

at looking around and seeing a home free of clutter. It's calming, and liberating, and just nice.

Benefits of a Minimalist Home

1. **Less stressful.** Clutter is a form of visual distraction, and everything in our vision pulls at our attention at least a little. The less clutter, the less visual stress we have. A minimalist home is calming.
2. **More appealing.** Think about photos of homes that are cluttered, and photos of 30 minimalist homes. The ones with almost nothing in them except some beautiful furniture, some nice artwork, and a very few pretty decorations, are the ones that appeal to most of us. You can make your home more appealing by making it more minimalist.
3. **Easier to clean.** It's hard to clean a whole bunch of objects, or to sweep or vacuum around a bunch of furniture. The more stuff you have, the more you have to keep clean, and the more complicated it is to clean around the stuff. Think about how easy it is to clean an empty room compared to one with 50 objects in it. That's an extreme example, of course, as I wouldn't recommend you have an empty room, but it's just to illustrate the difference.

What a Minimalist Home Looks

Like this would vary, of course, depending on your taste and how extreme of a minimalist you want to be. I am a minimalist, but not to any extreme. But here are some characteristics of a minimalist home:

1. **Minimal furniture.** A minimalist room would only contain a few essential pieces of furniture. A bedroom, for example, might have a simple bed (or even just a mattress), a dresser, and perhaps a night stand or book shelf. "One can furnish a room very luxuriously by taking out furniture rather than putting it in." - Francis Jourdain
2. **Clear surfaces.** All flat surfaces are clear, except for one or two decorations. There are not a whole bunch of knick knacks, and definitely not stacks of books or papers or other items.
3. **Accent decorations.** A home completely clear of things would be a bit boring, actually. So instead of having a coffee table completely free of any objects, you could have a simple vase with a few flowers, for example. Or a clear desk might just have a family photo. An otherwise empty wall might have a tasteful piece of art.

4. **Quality over quantity.** Instead of having a lot of stuff in your home, a minimalist would choose just a few really good things he loves and uses often. A really nice table, for example, is better than 5 pieces of pressboard furniture.

How to Create a Minimalist Home

The real key is to change your philosophy and shoot for the ideals in the previous section above. But here are some tips that I would offer to anyone trying to shoot for minimalism and create a minimalist home and environs free from chaos.

- **One room at a time.** Unless you're just moving into a place, it's hard to simplify an entire house at once. Focus on one room, and let that be your center of calm. Use it to inspire you to simplify the next room, and the next. Then do the same outside!
- **Look at the furniture.** The biggest things in any room are the furniture, so you should always begin simplifying a room by looking at the furniture. The fewer pieces of furniture, the better (within reason, of course). Think of which furniture can be eliminated without sacrificing comfort and livability. Go for a few pieces of plain, simple

furniture (example of a minimalist coffee table) with solid, subdued colors.

- **Only the essentials.** Whether looking at your furniture or anything else in the room, ask yourself if the item is truly essential. If you can live without it, get it out. Try to strip the room down to its essentials — you can always add a few choice items beyond the essentials later.
- **Clear floors.** Except for the furniture, your floors should be completely clear. Nothing should clutter the floor, nothing should be stacked, nothing should be stored on the floor. Once you've gotten your furniture down to the bare essentials, clear everything else on the floor — either donate it, trash it, or find a place for it out of sight.
- **Store stuff out of sight.** This has been mentioned in the above tips, but you should store everything you need out of sight, in drawers and cabinets. Bookshelves can be used to store books or DVDs or CDs, but shouldn't have much else except a few simple decorations (not whole collections of things).
- **Simple artwork.** To keep a room from being boring, you can put a simple painting, drawing or photo, framed with a subdued, solid color, on each wall if you want. Leave some walls bare if possible.

- **Simple decorations.** One or two simple decorations can serve as accents for a minimalist room. A vase of flowers or a small potted plant are two classic examples. If the rest of your room has subdued colors, your accents could use a bright color (such as red, or yellow) to draw the eye and give a plain room a splash of energy.
- **Plain patterns.** Solid colors are best for floor coverings (if you have any), furniture, etc. Complex patterns, such as flowers or checkers, are visual clutter.
- **Subdued colors.** You can have a splash of bright color in the room, but most of the room should be more subtle colors - white is classic minimalist, but really any solid colors that don't stress the eyes is good (earth colors come to mind, such as blues, browns, tans, greens).
- **Edit and eliminate.** You can still eliminate a good number of unnecessary things from a room you have already simplified. Just give it a couple of days, then look at everything with a fresh eye. What can be eliminated? Stored out of sight? What's not essential? You can come back to each room every few months, and sometimes you'll discover things you can simplify even more.
- **A place for everything.** It's important that you find a place for everything, and remember where those places are. Where do your

blender go? Give it a spot, and stick with it. Aim for logical spots that are close to where the thing is used, to make things more efficient, but the key is to designate a spot.

- **Sit back, relax, and enjoy.** Once you've simplified a room, take a moment to look around and enjoy it. It's so peaceful and satisfying. This is the reward for your hard work.

Minimalist Workspace

How minimalist is your workspace? An uncluttered workspace is a thing of beauty. The definition of a minimalist workspace will be different for each person. The most extreme minimalist workspace, I think, would be to have no desk or papers or computer or anything of the kind — just yourself. You'd think, and talk, and maybe sit on the floor.



Of course, that won't work for most of us, so it's more useful to look at our minimum requirements, and focus on creating a workspace that addresses these essentials and nothing more.

So the first step is for you to consider your requirements for working, and what's, essential to your workflow. If possible, streamline and simplify that workflow and those requirements. Then, once you've got that down to a minimum, see what the minimum setup would be for those essentials and your workflow. Eliminate everything unnecessary.

What are your requirements?

It's interesting to note that what you think your requirements are might not be the minimum. They might just be what you're used to doing. Taking myself as an example: I used to work with tons of paper, files, sticky notes, and all the usual office tools (pens, pencils, notebooks, pads, stapler, hole puncher, whiteout, calendar, personal organizer, etc.). But then I realized that it's possible to work without paper, and I've eliminated the need for all that stuff. In fact, as I've eliminated paper, I've eliminated the need for drawers.

Now, you might not have that luxury, and you might not want to go that extreme. Your needs are different than mine — but the point is to see if it's possible to change the way you work, so that you still get the essentials done, without all the same requirements. It's worth some thought at least — and if you make changes, as I did, you might find that changing things in small increments is better. I didn't do away with paper altogether. I did it in steps, eliminating different needs for paper one at a time.

My Minimalist Setup

Basically, I have an iMac and a very minimalist desk, with no drawers, printer, papers, files, or office tools. I work from home these days, and I do everything online. I do have a phone (elsewhere in my house, so it doesn't disturb me) and a cell phone (also elsewhere), but I don't have a PDA, an iPod, a printer (though my wife has ordered one for her needs), a scanner, a fax machine, or anything like that. I don't print anything and I don't use fax (an outdated technology).

On my computer, I mostly just use the browser, as I do nearly everything online. I also use text programs for writing and a couple other utilities for uploading files and photo editing. All my organizing needs are taken care

of on the computer: Address Book, Gmail, text files for to-do lists and errands and ideas and projects, Gcal for scheduling.

Tips for Creating Your Own Minimalist Workspace

You won't need to have my setup, but once you've determined your minimum needs, here are some tips for making your workspace as minimalist as possible. Not all tips will work for you, so pick and choose which ones will work best for your workflow.

- **Have one inbox.** If paper is a part of your life, keep an inbox tray on top of your desk and make sure ALL papers, including phone messages and sticky notes, go into this tray. You might have to train your co-workers who put papers on your desk if they're not already used to this. Don't leave papers scattered all over your desk, unless you're actually working on them at this moment. You might also have a "working file" folder for papers you're working on but not at this moment, but put this working file in a drawer, so that it's out of the way.
- **Clear out your inbox each day.** Nothing should go back in there after you process them. It's not a storage bin, but an inbox. To clear

your inbox, process top down, one item at a time. Make quick decisions on each item, and take action: file immediately, trash, forward to someone else, take immediate action, or put it on your to-do list and in your action folder to later action.

- **Clear your desk.** Aside from your computer, your inbox tray, your phone, and maybe a nice photo of a loved one, there should be nothing on top of your desk. No papers (again, unless you're working on them), no notes, no stapler or pens or other junk. Clear as much of it off as humanly possible. If you want to include a couple other essentials, you should, but be sure they absolutely must be there. Keep it as clear as possible, as a clear desk is a relaxing workspace. Use the decluttering method in the chapter on Clearing Clutter.
- **Get rid of knick-knacks.** This goes with the above item, but many people don't even think about all the little trinkets they have on top of their desk. They're usually unnecessary. Toss 'em!
- **Clear the walls.** Many people have all kinds of stuff posted on their walls. It creates visual clutter. Get them off your walls. If it's a reference guide, put it on your computer and set up a hotkey so you can call the guide up with a keystroke when needed.

- **Clear your computer desktop.** We'll cover how to keep your computer as minimalist as possible in the next chapter.
- **Re-examine your paper needs.** While you might think the way you do things now is necessary, it's possible you can do things digitally instead of through paper. Give this some serious thinking, and if possible, eliminate paper to the extent you can. It'll give you a more minimalist workspace. More on this in a couple chapters.
- **Eliminate unnecessary tools.** Think about each tool you have in your desk, in your work area, and even in your office. Do you need a stapler and hole puncher? Do you need all those pens? Do you really need a fax machine? Or a scanner? You might not have control over all these types of tools, but if you do, eliminate the ones you don't really need, maybe one at a time.
- **Simplify your filing.** As mentioned above, it's unnecessary to keep paper copies of files you have on your computer or can access online. Back stuff up online if you're worried about losing them. Having stuff digitally makes them searchable, which is much better than filing. Just archive, and search when necessary. If you do need paper files, keep them alphabetically and file immediately, so that you don't have a

huge “to be filed” pile. Once every few months, weed out unnecessary files.

- **Check each drawer.** One drawer at a time, take out all the contents and eliminate everything you don’t need. It’s much nicer to use drawers if you can open them and see order. Have a designated spot for each item and make sure to put those items back in that spot immediately, every time.
- **Clear the floor.** There should be nothing on your floor but your desk and chair. No files, no boxes. Keep it clear!

Minimalist Health

Most people would agree that most Americans eat way too much -- and increasingly, much of the rest of the industrialized world. So for most people, eating less is the answer. Not diet foods or fad diets or health smoothies or liquid cleanses. Just eating less. That's easier said than done, so we'll look at some ways to achieve that.



But minimalism in food goes beyond that. It extends to what you eat, and how you prepare it. You want to eat foods in as natural a state as possible,

avoiding processed foods. And you want to prepare them simply, so you don't have to eat fast food or spend all day in the kitchen.

Eat Less

If people who are overweight, or on their way to becoming overweight, ate less, many 66 of their health problems would be solved. Sure, eating the right foods and exercising are also important, but excess calories are a fundamental problem for most people.

When you eat too many calories every day, for a long period of time, they're stored as fat. A little fat on your body is necessary, but too much fat causes all kinds of health problems.

So how to eat less? Some ideas:

- **Eat until you're almost full.** The Okinawans eat until they're 80% full, and they're the healthiest people on earth. Don't wait until you're completely full.
- **Eat smaller, lighter meals.** Nothing heavy, nothing too big.
- **Eat lots of fiber-rich and water-rich foods,** such as fruits and veggies and beans. They're filling and healthy.

- **Avoid the restaurants that serve huge amounts.** Which means most of them. Or only order side dishes or salads if you do go. Or split a huge meal with someone.
- **Fast for 18-24 hours, a couple times a week.** Sounds counter to most health advice, I know, but It works.

Eat Clean

While eating less will solve a lot of problems, eating clean is also a good idea. Basically, it's eating food in its natural state, without it being processed. This doesn't necessarily mean raw food, although raw is good. I'm not advocating a raw diet. I'm advocating a whole food diet, an unprocessed one, often called "clean eating".

So what is clean eating? Here's one definition:

- Food consumed in its most natural state, or close to it.
- Which means nothing processed.
- Fruits and veggies, of course.
- Nuts, natural nut butters, nut oils.

This is my goal, at least. I don't do it 100% of the time. I shoot for about 90%. This means I have treats, I eat out at restaurants, I can drink beer. Just in moderation.

Cook Simply

I highly recommend that you cook for yourself. It will not only save money but save natural resources and it's much healthier. Eating out at restaurants is convenient, but expensive and usually unhealthy -- even if you make healthy choices, they usually serve way too much, and usually it's not healthy.

So cook for yourself, but do it simply, with simple recipes that don't take a lot of time. Use simple, natural ingredients and some good spices so you can make it taste good without adding a lot of sugary stuff and without frying.

Minimalist Kitchen Setup

Keep your kitchen minimalist as well. Only keep as many dishes and silverware and pots and pans as you need. A couple of good, sharp knives and a cutting board. That's pretty much all you need. Don't have single-use

kitchen tools and gadgets -- they waste space. Things such as a juice maker, waffle iron, ice cream scooper, and on and on. You will barely use them and they're not needed.

Minimalist Fitness

We've covered eating healthier, but what about exercise? This is another tough area for a lot of people, because many people either hate exercise or put it off for various reasons. But getting fit doesn't have to be difficult or complicated.

What's the minimal amount of exercise you need to get fit? What kind of exercise do you need to do, and what kind of equipment do you need?

Minimalist fitness focuses on working out less than others would have you do, with less equipment. Two common barriers for people who want to exercise and get in shape are a lack of time and money needed for fitness.

Create Time for Exercises

Exercise doesn't need to take an hour or two each day -- you can get by on an hour or two a week if you do it right. In fact, if you're just starting out in exercise, I suggest you start small, and start slowly. Just start walking, if

you've been inactive, for 15-20 minutes a few times a week. If you've been active, 20 minutes a day, 5 days a week would be great. Eventually getting up to 30 minutes is even better, but you can get a great workout in just 20 minutes.

Who doesn't have 15-20 minutes to save their lives? Do it in the morning, after you wake up, at lunch, or right after work on the way home. If you've been active for a few months, you can get a great workout by doing intervals (walk-run, or jog-run, or biking slow then fast, or swimming), or by doing some of the bodyweight workouts below. The key is to get active, most days of the week (4-5 is best). Get outside, do something fun. Play basketball, go skating, surf, run and jump with your kids, play soccer or rugby, climb or hike or paddle. If you go longer than 20-30 minutes, because you're having fun, that's OK, but it's not necessary.

Minimal Equipment

It takes no equipment to get a great workout and get in shape, and with one or two pieces of simple equipment, you can turn that great workout into a fantastic one. And with little or no equipment required for a fantastic workout, you can do it at home, or wherever you are. It's hard not to find time for this type of workout — you can even do it while watching TV!

Using just your bodyweight, you can do a large number of challenging exercises. I designed a workout that I do when I can't make it to the gym, for example, and I can testify that it's incredibly challenging.

If you add just one or two pieces of equipment: a dumbbell, a kettlebell, a jump rope, a medicine ball, or a chinup bar, for example, you can increase the challenge even more.

Bodyweight workouts are great because there are no gym fees or need to buy expensive equipment, you can do the workout anywhere, anytime, most exercises involve many muscles working in coordination, resulting in great overall fitness and strength, and for people who are just starting with strength training, bodyweight is often more than enough to begin with. And it gives you a good foundation of strength you can build on later.

I suggest starting with bodyweight exercises, and then slowly transitioning to a combination of bodyweight and weight training to get a good balance. And even if you're doing a complete weight training program, you can always use bodyweight exercises anytime you can't make it to the gym.

A sample bodyweight workout: a circuit of pullups, pushups, jump squats, bicycle crunches, jumping lunges, burpees, hanging knee raises, diamond

pushups, planks, chinups. This is by no means the only way to do it -- there are tons of other bodyweight exercises you can choose from, and you should mix it up with a variety of cardio exercises as well.

Get outside and get active. Walk or run or bike. Mix in some dumbbells, barbells, kettlebells, jump rope, martial arts. As you get better, make your workouts short but intense. Also try Crossfit to really challenge yourself with a minimalist workout.

Going Paperless, Digitizing

We are living in a digital world -- an obvious statement, perhaps, but if it's obvious why do we still have so much paperwork in offices? While at one time I was a paper user, several years ago I started re-examining my assumptions, as things became more and more digital. Do I really need this to be in paper form? The answer, in every single case, was "no".



The only reason you can't change something from paper form to digital is that someone -- perhaps you, perhaps a client, perhaps a boss -- is

reluctant to change the way things are done. They don't want to figure out a new way to do things, because that can be difficult.

Sure, changing from paper to digital takes some work, but think of the reward: an office that doesn't have mountains of paperwork, that doesn't have huge filing cabinets full of paper files, that doesn't have to spend so much on paper products and waste so many natural resources.

A digital office is a minimalist one in many ways. Information takes up so much less space, for one, which means less storage space is needed and less paper clutter everywhere. There's a lot less work, because you don't have to move things from digital to paper (printing), then physically send it to someone in your office (or worse, outside the office), then move it from paper to digital (data entry), and so on. Also, digital files are searchable, by the computer, while information in paper files takes much longer to find.

So yes, it takes work to go paperless, but the payoff is great, especially for the minimalist.

How to Go Paperless

The main thing is to consider every piece of paper, every paper form, every paper note, and ask yourself whether it needs to be paper, and whether it can be made digital or not. I can almost guarantee you, the answer is no (it doesn't need to be paper) and yes (it can be made digital).

Some examples:

- **Printing things to read.** If you print things out to read, stop. Read it digitally. That was an easy one.
- **Stop keeping paper files.** I used to print things out and file the paper in folders. Now I just keep everything digitally, and have it searchable on my computer.
- **Kill faxes.** If your office still uses it, stop now. It's an outdated technology. Anything that can be faxed can be emailed -- it might mean you need to scan something, but it can be done.
- **Stop sending paper memos and letters.** Also stop circulating documents in paper form. I don't know if people still do this, but email has replaced those uses.

- **Turn all your forms into online forms.** Let people log into a website and fill out the form. Now you don't need to enter the information from paper forms, and you save tons on printing costs. Invoice digitally. Lots of great online software to do this.
- **Pay for things digitally.** Stop using checks. Use online banking and Paypal. Stop bills and notices and catalogs and newsletters that come in the mail in paper form. This takes a phone call for each one.
- **Stop getting paper magazines and newspapers.** They're available online.

Stop printing contracts to be signed and then mailed to other parties. Use an online contract signing service. It's also completely legal. Again, these are just some examples. Your situation will be different, and the difficulty of going paperless will vary from office to office. You might not be able to eliminate paper, but you can probably reduce it.

Digitizing your physical stuff

You probably have lots of things that are in paper form or in some kind of physical digital format, such as DVDs or CDs. These can all be digitized and stored on the computer, and the physical forms can be trashed or sold or

given away. I've done this with almost everything, from photos to memorabilia to paper records to DVDs and CDs. The result is I have no need for all this clutter, and everything is stored using no physical space. This also takes a little work, but if you do it a little at a time, it's not hard.

A few notes:

- *Digitize photos.* If you have a lot of old print photos, you can scan them in a little at a time. Or send them to a company that will do them all for you.
- *Take photos of memorabilia.* Do you have little items or papers that have sentimental value? Snap a quick digital photo, and get rid of the item. The memories have been captured.
- *Scan papers.* Again, this can be done a little at a time, or hire a teenager (your own or a neighbor or relative) to scan them, or send them to a company that will scan for you.
- *Digitize CDs and DVDs.* There are lots of programs that will rip a CD or DVD, and then you can store all your songs and movies on your computer and have the library accessible via a program such as iTunes. You can do a stack of disks in an afternoon.

Wardrobe and Grooming

Developing a minimalist wardrobe and grooming routine (not to mention grooming products) is a major challenge for most people. Many people have huge closets and dressers overflowing with clothes -- so many that they can't possibly wear them all, and can't even remember what they have. It's overwhelming and a bit wasteful.



And grooming routines can take an hour for many people, even if they're rushing. They have cabinets and showers and drawers full of grooming

products, from hair stuff to makeup to lotions to tweezers and scissors and razors to nail kits to facial products to teeth-care products to soap and shampoo and conditioners and bodywash and facial wash and more.

Now, you might not be as bad as all that, but if you're having trouble getting to minimal, you may want to rethink your needs. Start with this: you don't need as much as you think you do. Consider people who live in Third World countries -- many use no grooming products at all, except soap if they're lucky, and have barely any clothing. Now, I'm not suggesting you live like someone in the Third World, but I am saying that what you have is definitely more than you need. It's a matter of finding a balance, so you can live comfortably but not in excess.

Wardrobe

To have a functioning wardrobe without needing too many clothes, it's best to have options that can all go together. Every shirt or top should go with every pants, shorts, or skirt. The way to do this is to choose a color scheme and a style.

For example, I go with plain solid colors, and most of my clothes can all go together -- the colors I use are blue, grey, black, brown, tan and green. I

prefer to go without bright colors, but you may be different. Figure out your color scheme.

But you see, it isn't about me. The late, great, Steve Jobs wore his signature black turtleneck with jeans and sneakers every single day. Mark Zuckerberg also wears a gray t-shirt with a black hoody and jeans when seen in public.

All of these relates to the concept of decision fatigue, which is a psychological condition in which a person's productivity suffers as a result of becoming mentally exhausted from making so many irrelevant decisions. Steve Jobs or Mark Zuckerberg only choose one color and wear throughout without having to think to enable them save that time and energy for other useful things instead.

Stick with a classic style that won't be out of fashion in a few months. Go for high-quality clothes that won't fall apart after a few washes. Let go of the need to have lots of clothes. Sure, there's a feeling of plenty that comes with having a lot of clothes, and that can be pleasant. But even better is a feeling of having quality over quantity.

Go through your closet. Take everything out, and separate the clothes into two piles: pieces you've worn in the last 6 months, and clothes you haven't.

Of course, if it's seasonal, such as a winter coat, give it a 12-month window. Take the pile of clothes you've worn in the last 6 months, and put them back neatly. Donate the rest to charity or give it to a friend who'll use them.

From now on, avoid shopping if possible. Only go clothes or shoe shopping when you absolutely have to -- and even then, consider going to a second-hand shop. When you are tempted to buy something, ALWAYS ask yourself: "Am I going to wear this all the time?" If the answer is "No" or "I'm not sure", don't buy it.

Grooming

This is a tough area, especially for women. I can't claim to know how to advise women when it comes to grooming, as I absolutely don't understand their needs. My woman is far from minimalist, although she's much simpler than many women. She doesn't use hairspray or other products in her hair (she uses a straightener), and she uses minimal makeup (and sometimes none at all). But I don't pretend to understand all the facial and body products she uses.

I'll just describe what I do, then give some suggestions, and allow you to decide what's truly necessary for you. I've reduced my needs greatly -- not

least by shaving my head. I'll admit this isn't for everyone, but for me it has made my life so much simpler. I don't have need for fancy shampoos or conditioners or gels or sprays ... or even combs or brushes, for that matter. All I need for my head is an electric razor, which I apply once a week, and then I forget all about it.

Other than that, I use soap, a toothbrush, and toothpaste. I really feel this is all that's necessary. And of course, if you don't shave your face, you need even less as you wouldn't need a razor or shaving cream. And if you don't mind smelling a little, you don't need deodorant. Soap and toothpaste are pretty mandatory in my book.

What about those who don't shave their heads? I recommend a low-maintenance haircut. Perhaps something short, definitely something that needs minimal styling and brushing and product. Keep it simple.

I also think, if you use facial products or lotions or makeup, you should consider keeping it to a minimum. I won't try to list what that is, but you can probably figure out the simplest possible setup, and get rid of the rest (maybe keeping a few things for special occasions). Keep it simple, so you can get ready in a flash and not be weighed down by a bunch of clutter and a long routine.

Conclusion

Whether you are a minimalist by choice or forced to reduce your possessions because of limited space, you may benefit from these ideas for making space in your home by reducing clutter, optimizing the space that you have, and creating versatility in your storage areas. Keeping things simple can be a rewarding venture, both physically and spiritually.

Life is not meant to be passively projected through the screens that surround us on a daily basis but to be experienced. It might sound weird, but there are really only a few overarching ideas you need to keep mind. So, whether you're interested in trading your commercialised lifestyle for complete simplicity, implementing this decluttering system explained through this book should help you to comfortably live with less.

These secret strategies can simply help you to declutter your environment for heightened organisation and reduced stress and they are bound to set you on course for success - all without causing too much disruption to your daily routine.

Many people who rid themselves of excess possessions find that their life is less cluttered, less complicated, more predictable, and more comforting.

Minimalists report that it is much easier to organize and the simple life has many rewards.

Simplifying your life can even have financial rewards. As your priorities shift from buying things that you like to only buying things that you need, you'll notice yourself getting pickier about what you buy. You will not want to clutter up your limited or organized space, so you will only buy things that fit, are of a high enough quality to last, and that you know you'll love. Buying only quality products may seem more expensive, but the money you save on frivolous spending and replacing junk will more than cover the few investments that you make.

Decluttering and organizing your surroundings can be life-altering - lifting the weight of the possessions, papers, digital clutter and commitments that burden you can open your space and mind to opportunities that were previously obscured.

So, do not hesitate to go ahead and start living clean, light and free, no compromises!

To your success,

Brandon Bishop