

MINIMALISM: LIVE A MEANINGFUL LIFE BY THE MINIMALISTS | BOOK SUMMARY & PDF

Minimalism: Live a Meaningful Life is written by Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus - The Minimalists. Their book questions what it means to be happy and explores how to live a meaningful life. By identifying and explaining five core values Joshua and Ryan offer useful advice on how you can take steps towards living a life full of happiness, passion and freedom. Their book makes you take a step back and take inventory of your life, it can open your eyes to things you are doing, and things you own that may be getting in the way of your own happiness and freedom.

ARE YOU HAPPY?

The material possessions we accumulate will not make us happy. We all know this, and yet we often search for life's meaning through accumulating more possessions. Real happiness, however, comes from who we are—from who we've become. Real happiness comes from within.

Of course, happiness is not the point—a meaningful life is. We must stop searching for happiness and instead start looking for meaning. If our short-term actions align with our long-term values, we'll find purpose in whatever we're doing.

Paradoxically, it is this way of living—living deliberately—that leads to true happiness.

Discontent

Discontent didn't suddenly descend from the heavens, striking like a bolt of lightning. Discontentment doesn't work that way. Rather, it's a slow burn; it's a pernicious problem that creeps into your life after years of subtle dissatisfaction.

Take inventory

Take inventory of your life, find out what makes you unhappy, and what you need to hang to experience happiness, passion and freedom.

1. Identify your anchors - what is making you feel stuck and preventing you from growing. Write these all down.
2. Identify your priorities - start by dividing your anchors into two categories; major and minor anchors.
3. Major anchors = debt, houses, mortgages, careers, major relationships etc.

4. Minor anchors = internet bills, household bills, clutter, daily driving time, etc.
5. Start by tackling the major anchors. Pay off cars, debts.
6. Start eliminating possessions, in favour only of things that you like, enjoy and actually use in your daily life.

Make difficult decisions

Sentimental items are bad or evil and holding on to them is not wrong. Rather, the malign nature of sentimental items is far more subtle. If you want to get rid of an item but the only reason you are holding on to it is for sentimental reasons—if it's weighing on you, if it's an anchor—then perhaps it's time to get rid of it, perhaps it's time to free yourself of the weight. That doesn't mean you need to get rid of everything, though.

- We are not our stuff.
- We are more than our possessions.
- Our memories are within us, not our things.
- Our stuff weighs on us mentally and emotionally.
- Old photographs can be scanned.
- You can take pictures of items you want to remember.
- Items that are sentimental for us can be useful to others.
- Letting go is freeing.

DISCOVERING MINIMALISM

Enter Colin Wright, 24 year old entrepreneur. On his website he wrote about how this movement called minimalism allowed him to focus on the important stuff in his life, while shedding the excess junk that had gotten in the way.

Colin owned only 72 things at the time—there were pictures of all his possessions on his website—and all of his possessions fit into a bag he carried with him while he traveled.

The most striking part about this story was Colin's contentment: He exuded happiness and excitement and passion. He loved his life.

Leo Babauta and Joshua Becker proved that minimalism was for anyone interested in living a simpler, more intentional life. It was for anyone who wanted to focus on the important aspects in life, rather than the material possessions so heavily linked to success and happiness by our culture.

Minimalist

A minimalist can, however, own a car and a house and have children and a career. Minimalism looks different for everyone because it's about finding what is essential to you.

Minimalism can help us in several ways, including:

- Reclaiming our time
- Ridding ourselves of excess stuff
- Enjoying our lives
- Discovering meaning in our lives
- Living in the moment
- Focusing on what's important
- Pursuing our passions
- Finding happiness
- Doing anything we want to do
- Finding our missions
- Experiencing freedom
- Creating more, consuming less"

Minimalism is a lifestyle choice. Minimalists search for happiness not through things, but through life itself; thus, it's up to you to determine what is necessary and what is superfluous to your life.

What it means to live a meaningful life

There are five Values that allow us to live a meaningful life

1. Health
2. Relationships
3. Passions
4. Growth
5. Contribution

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH

Health is the best place to start your journey toward a more meaningful life. Living a healthy lifestyle gives you the optimum conditions to do live a happy life.

In its simplest terms, there are two main ingredients of living a healthy life: eating and exercising. In other words: what we put into our bodies and what we do with our bodies.

What you put into your body

A change in dietary lifestyle is not only a change in what you consume, but a change in how you think about what you consume. A temporary diet almost always fails after the post-diet behaviour commences. A lifestyle change, by definition, can't fail unless you make a negative change thereafter.

- Foods to avoid: processed and packaged foods, sugar.
- Foods to reduce: gluten, breads & pastas, any drinks other than water, dairy, meat.
- Incorporate more: water, green drinks, fresh smoothies, vegetables, beans & legumes, fruits, fish, organic foods.
- Dietary lifestyles that have benefit; vegetarianism, veganism, paleo, pescatarianism, intermittent fasting.

Develop daily food habits

Thus, your diet is marked by the daily habits by which you live. Once you adopt a healthy dietary lifestyle, you will feel better, and your body will thank you. Food should be treated as nutrition, not entertainment.

Medicine, drugs & chemicals

Some medications are important and lifesaving, but many medications—complete with their laundry list of side-effects—are unnecessary and can be avoided with proper diet and exercise. Furthermore, if you're doing things that damage your body, then you will pay the price for it.

What you do with your body

Be concerned with being healthy, being fit, and feeling good about your physical fitness. The most important measurements of success are not measured in pounds on a scale, but rather by two things:

1. Are you constantly improving your fitness?
2. Are you happy with your progress?

Joshua's exercise principles

Enjoy exercise, exercise relieves stress and use variety to keep exercise fresh!

Eighteen minutes is all you need; 1. Push Ups 2. Pull Ups 3. Squats

Bounce between exercises, complete 3-5 sets of each, start with however many reps you can do, and aim to increase. Even if you can't do a single push up or pull up, work on it.

The musts of health

- eat a nutritional diet to be healthy.
- exercise regularly to be healthy.
- eliminate harmful substances.
- treat your body like it is your most precious possession—because it is.

We encourage you to create your own must list. What must you do to experience a better, healthier life?

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Your relationships are the people with whom you have frequent contact, the people around you—friends, partners, spouses, lovers, roommates, coworkers, acquaintances, or anyone you interact with on a regular basis.

Reflecting on past relationships

You can learn from your past relationships. The good times tell you what went well and give you a strategy by which you can model your future. And the bad times help you identify how things went wrong and give you clues and social cues by which you can avoid bad relationships in the future. Everything is clearer in retrospect.

Evaluating current relationships

It's time to take an honest look at your current relationships. Do they make you happy? Do they satisfy you? Are they supportive? Do they help you grow? Do they contribute to your life in positive, meaningful ways? These are all important questions to consider while evaluating your current relationships.

Categorise relationships into primary, secondary and peripheral relationships. Establish whether they are positive, neutral or negative.

The idea here is to focus on creating the most meaningful relationships possible—relationships that will reside in your top two tiers. Similarly, there are people in your primary and secondary tiers who likely don't belong there. It is up to you to decide which role these people play in your life.

Eight elements of great relationships

Meaningful relationships have eight main elements that must be nurtured for the relationships to grow and improve:

1. Love
2. Trust
3. Honesty
4. Caring
5. Support
6. Attention
7. Authenticity
8. Understanding

If you focus on the above eight elements, you will strengthen your relationships more than you thought possible. Sure, it takes a considerable amount of hard work, focus, and time, but having meaningful relationships is worth every bit of effort you put into them.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTIVATING YOUR PASSIONS

People tend to designate one of three labels to their work: job, career, or mission. When you speak about your work, which term do you use?

Chances are you have a job—the daily grind. Or, if you’re unemployed, you’re probably looking for a job. It’s a cultural imperative, the mythical American Dream—it’s what we’re “supposed” to do.

The truth is we all need money to live: there’s no doubt we all need to pay for a roof over our heads, food, clothes, medical care, and various other essentials.

But the aforementioned cycle—what we’ve been sold as the “American Dream”—is devoid of meaning. The American Dream will not make you happy. In fact, for many, the pursuit of this set of ideals is oppressive and is guaranteed to be a losing enterprise.

The ugly roots of a career

People invest so much of themselves into their careers that they establish an identity and a social status based upon their job title. One of the first things a person asks when you’re becoming acquainted is What do you do? This “innocent” question actually says, I will judge you as a person by how you make your money, and I will assign a particular social status to you based on your occupation.

One way to answer this question is by stating what you're passionate about, instead of spouting off what your vocation is. So, instead of saying, "I'm a Director of Operations," say, "I'm passionate about writing (or scrap-booking or rock climbing or whatever you're passionate about)." It's nice to follow that statement with, "What are you passionate about?"

Over time you can remove your identity from your career and put it into its appropriate place—your life. Your identity should come from your meaningful life, not from how you earn a paycheck.

The confluence of passion and mission

You can be passionate about virtually anything. Consequently, any line of work can be your mission. Just because something sounds boring to one person doesn't mean it's not exciting and rewarding for another. It is perfectly plausible to think that someone can be deeply passionate about accounting the same way another person might be passionate about horseback riding.

Passionate people

There are, however, two distinct differences that distinguish passionate people from uninspired people. First, passionate people know what they are most passionate about, they know what gets them excited, what gets them energized, what gets them into a peak state.

Second, passion fuels more passion. Passionate people turn to their passions when they are feeling uninspired.

Using what you're passionate about to keep you focused and fuel more passion is a critical part in discovering your mission. But first you must discover what you're passionate about.

Removal

1. Removing anchors to find your passion - it's often difficult to discover your passions because we tend to get stuck in the laboriousness of our daily routines.
2. Removing the anchor of identity - it's hard to realize you are not your job, you are not your stuff, you are not your debt, you are not your paycheck—you are so much more. Find meaningful labels such as mentor, leader, minimalist.
3. Removing the anchor of status - the best way to escape the destructive influence of status, and the cultural stereotypes that come along with it, is to turn down the volume. Place less value on what people think about your job.
4. Removing the anchor of certainty - certainty feels nice—it makes you feel

comfortable, it makes you feel warm and fuzzy. But, it's sometimes the biggest underlying reason you don't make the changes you want to make.

5. Removing the anchor of money - the best way to remove the anchor of money is to give money less importance in your life.

Finding your passion

Once you've removed your anchors, the horizon becomes vividly clear, which allows you to focus on finding your passion. The first question we typically ask people is a fairly standard question: What would you do with your life if money wasn't an object? Followed by; "When was the last time you felt true excitement?" "What were five other (different) experiences like this?" "Why were you excited each of those times?"

Turning your passion into your mission

If you want to learn how to turn your passion into your mission, the fastest, most efficient way is to emulate someone already doing it. It's called modeling, and that's what we did. We saw the likes of Colin Wright, Leo Babauta, Tammy Strobel, and Joshua Becker doing what we wanted to do—writing and contributing to people in meaningful ways—and we knew they already had a recipe for success.

Yes, it's easier said than done. But it's worth it. You deserve to pursue your passions, you deserve to live your mission, you deserve to live a meaningful life.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GROWTH

You must continue to improve; you must continue to grow. If you're not growing, you're dying; and if you're dying, then, by definition, you're not living a meaningful life.

Making changes

Once you make a change in your life, the journey isn't over—you must continue making changes if you want to be happy long-term.

- Giant leaps - some changes you make are huge and immediate. Take, for example, ending a relationship, quitting your job on the spot.
- Daily incremental changes - most change happens gradually, wherein you don't take a one-time giant leap, but you make small, gradual changes in your everyday life which amount to massive changes over time.

Finding leverage

The first step in any change, big or small, is making the decision to change. We're talking about making a real decision—one in which you make the change a must in your life—not something you should change someday when it becomes convenient for you.

Leverage is your ability to associate enough satisfaction with the change that you have no choice but to make the change a must in your life (e.g., “I must exercise” is appreciably different from “I should exercise”). The more leverage you have, the easier the decision is to make and follow through with—because the satisfaction you'll experience on the other side of the change is so great that you must make the change a reality.

Taking action

Once you decide to make a change in your life—once you have enough leverage—it's important to take immediate action toward making the change. You should take one step in the right direction. You must build some momentum first. These small changes add up quickly, and they compound on top of each other. And, pretty soon, you'll glance in the rearview and be stunned by how much progress you've made.

Raise your standards

What seemed impossible yesterday, will often seem easy tomorrow. So if you want to continue to grow, you must continue to raise your standards; otherwise, you'll plateau. Or worse, if you lower your standards, you'll atrophy.

Getting outside your comfort zone is an important part of growth. You needn't raise the bar too high, but just high enough to make your change a little more difficult each day.

Consistent actions

The key to real growth is consistency. Consistent, gradual action taken every day is the way we changed our lives. It feels like a slow climb at first, but once you build enough momentum, you won't want to stop growing. It's growth that makes you feel alive.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTRIBUTION

As you grow, something amazing tends to happen: you have more of yourself to give. It's an incredible cycle: the more you grow, the more you can help others grow; and the more you help others grow, the more you grow in return.

A nice thing about contributing to other people is there are countless ways to do so. And there isn't a right or wrong way to contribute: all contribution is positive. Thus, it is important to learn how to best contribute to the people around you.

Whether you're donating your time to a charity, or you're finding new ways to contribute to your primary relationships, you are doing one thing: adding value.

Contributing to others

There are two key ways you can contribute to others:

1. Local organisations - help out with an already established local organisation helping out the community.
2. Start something yourself - typically, if you're going to start your own thing, you get there by contributing to local organizations first, determining how you can best add value in the process.

The good news about contribution is no matter how you contribute, you get to feel an immense satisfaction from your contributions—a satisfaction like no other.

Giving is living

Unless you contribute beyond yourself, your life will feel perpetually self-serving. It's okay to operate in your own self-interest, but doing so exclusively creates an empty existence. A life without contribution is a life without meaning. The truth is that giving is living. We feel truly alive only when we are growing and contributing. That's what a real life is all about. That's what it means to live a meaningful life—a life filled with great health, great relationships, and ultimate passion.

CONFLUENCE

We've noticed over time there are often two values that rise to the top of a person's priority list. In other words, of the Five Values, you'll tend to make two of them a priority. This can vary drastically depending on the person and their desires and beliefs.

It's important to note that just because a person has two values on which they focus most, that doesn't make the bottom three less important.

We recommend incorporating each of the Five Values into your daily life, because making all five areas the core of your everyday life is the best way to ensure you are living a meaningful life.

The role of minimalism

Living a meaningful life and minimalism go hand in hand. Minimalism acts as a tool, helping you focus on what's important much more easily; it clears away the clutter so you can focus on living more deliberately. What excess items, tasks, and relationships can you remove from your life so you can focus more of your time and energy on all Five Values?

None of this was easy. It takes daily focus and a commitment to constant improvement. And to continue living a meaningful life, we must continue to commit to constantly improving each area of our lives. We must do so every day. Small daily improvements make all the difference.