

What is Essentialism and How You Can Benefit from It

Essentialism is a way of life that helps you navigate a distracting world by focusing on things that are important to you. In other words, essentialism means 'less but better'.

In our ever distracting world overloaded with information, there has been an increasing interest in minimalism – 'less is more' and Marie Kondo's house clearing.

People have become exhausted with the availability of things, consumer products, life choices, and demands. It is never-ending, and it is no surprise that many people are turning to simpler ways of living.

Essentialism has some similarities with minimalism, but these two concepts are very different.

What Is Essentialism?

In 2014, Greg McKeown published the best selling book: *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*, and he has been teaching individuals, corporations and world leaders about the art of essentialism ever since.

Greg defines essentialism as:

Less but better.

Essentialism is a way of life that helps you navigate a distracting world by focusing on things that are important to you. Essentialism is not minimalism where you reduce your material possessions to the minimum

Essentialism is a mindset for deciding whether something is important to you or not. If something is not important, you eliminate it.

So how can you benefit from essentialism and live a simpler, more essential way of life?

Learn to Say 'No' More

One of the many reasons we feel stressed out and overwhelmed is because we say yes to far too many things.

Saying 'yes' is easier than saying 'no', but it leaves you in the difficult position of having to carry through on a commitment you might not have wanted in the first place.

It is important to think carefully about your decisions first.

It is far better to say 'let me get back to you' first than to say 'yes' immediately and regret it later. Because then, you will have to either carry through with the commitment halfheartedly or waste a lot of time and effort trying to get out of the commitment later.

Of course, there will always be things you may not want to do but have to do: your taxes, doing the dishes, and going to the dentist. But a lot of our commitments and invitations are choices, not obligations. you can turn them down if you want to.

Focus on Your Priority

Notice that I did not use the word 'priorities'. This is a mistake many people make. They have many 'priorities' but not a single 'priority'.

The key to living an essential life is understanding what your priority is.

Is it your family? Your career? Your hobby? What is it?

Most people never discover what it is they are most interested in and instead go from one interest to another. This leads to them never experiencing the joy of creating something special around something they have built for themselves.

You will know your true priority once you know what you want out of life.

For me, my priority is to help as many people as I can by helping them discover the benefits of organization and productivity. Because I identified this as my priority, I can make better decisions about what I want to do with my day. It also makes it easier to say no to the things that do not interest me.

If I am asked to commit to something and it does not contribute towards this priority, then it is easy for me to say no.

You Are in Control of Your Day

Because essentialism reduces your commitments to only the essential, it puts you in control of your day.

Most people do not know what they want, and this unwittingly allows other people to take control of their day. For example, you may have friends and family telling you where to be and with whom, or bosses and colleagues requesting you do this or do that.

It all leaves you feeling empty and unfulfilled.

When you know what is important to you and you focus on only those things that bring you joy and happiness, your day becomes your day, not someone else's. Again, this involves having to say 'no' more than you say yes.

Over time, you will find your friends, family, colleagues, and boss respecting your time much more, and that is when you start to gain control over your day. Gaining control of your day allows you to focus on the things you deem important.

It also means that you get to accomplish your priority in higher quality, which earns you far more respect than if you were trying to do everything all at once.

All Journeys Are Made Up of Tiny Steps

Desmond Tutu once said:

'How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.'

Anything you want to accomplish is made up of small bites. If you want to save 1 million US dollars, you save one dollar at a time. If you want to complete a marathon, you do so one step at a time.

Everything you want to accomplish is made up of tiny steps that you consistently take over time.

I have always been attracted to writing a daily journal but consistently failed to turn this into a habit. That changed when I began practicing essentialism and having a 'less is more' mindset.

Instead of believing I had to write a thousand or more words per day, I set the goal of writing no more than five sentences per day. This is not many, but it helped instill in me the habit of writing a journal daily, which was the main goal.

Now, I look forward to sitting down at the end of the day with my journal and writing those few sentences as a summary of my day.

Over a week, I will not have much to show for my journaling efforts. But over many years, when I consistently do it, I will have around 8,900 sentences. That is roughly the length of a best-selling novel.

Build Routines Around What Is Essential to You

There are three things important to me: creating content, exercising, and reading.

I love doing all these things. And if I get to read something, create content I can publish, and exercise every day, I can say I had a great day. Because I have identified these three things, I built them into my daily routines.

I begin the day with writing whenever I can. I create content mid-morning, and I exercise at 2 pm. They are not only built into my mental schedule, but they are also scheduled on my calendar as well. I close out my day with twenty to thirty minutes of reading before going to sleep.

It is your routines that drive you towards accomplishing what you want to accomplish.

If you are busy doing everyone else's work, you will not be able to achieve anything for yourself. You will be like a puppet being controlled by outside forces.

But if you start your day with time for yourself and do your priority, then you will maintain control of your day and life.

Why Less Is More

Our lives are full of opportunities, and these opportunities are everywhere.

Twenty years ago, if a teenager wanted to make money from creating short films, they would be laughed at unless they had rich enough parents to buy them the necessary camera equipment for them to try.

But even if they had the right equipment and could make films, they had nowhere to showcase them. Today, the phone you carry around with you everywhere has the potential to make you millions of dollars. Platforms like YouTube and Vimeo provide people with this opportunity

So, if it is easy to make so much money, why are so few people doing it?

Because there are too many opportunities.

With so many opportunities, it is incredibly difficult to choose which one to take. The successful people today are the ones who chose one opportunity and ran with it long enough for it to turn into success.

Just to give you some examples of people who turned video making into success: Casey Neistat created real-life stories about living in New York.^[1] Matt D'Avella took minimalism and film-making and turned that into success^[2], and Aileen Xu, AKA Lavendaire, took simple living and created videos around that theme.^[3]

Although they are all talented people in their own right, their success was not just built on their talents. It was also built on focusing on one theme and staying consistent over many years.

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