

# THE MINIMALISM MANIFESTO

Minimalism is for everyone

## 11 principles for a conscious living

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1. Minimalism is what you make of it. There are no rigid rules.
2. Focus on what is essential for you and follow your own star.
3. Choosing wisely what you allow in your life leads to ease.
4. Nourishing basic needs is the highest form of celebrating life.
5. Use things without owning them and share what you have with others.
6. Embracing responsibility inspires to live a proactive and sustainable life.
7. Appreciating resources is beneficial overall and creates more justice.
8. Mindful communication is the key to respect yourself and other beings.
9. Asking questions can cause that you want to buck the trend.
10. Turn off your devices and enjoy being offline as often as possible.
11. Surround yourself with like-minded people and spread minimalism as a lifestyle.

**I firmly believe: Minimalism is the best companion you can have in your life journey.** As a fixed star it shows you the way and guides you on your own unique personal adventure through this universe. Minimalism inspires you to focus on what really matters to you and it helps you not to stray from your personal path, because, in our consumption-oriented, over-abundant society, many distractions and obstacles await each of us.

With this manifesto I draw a minimalist constellation on our sky map. I want to inspire you to look with me into the vastness of the universe and follow the guiding idea: Stop consuming and start living! Here are a few hints about what has empowered and motivated me and other minimalists I met along the way.

## **We are all natural-born minimalists**

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Have you ever thought about how we are all natural-born minimalists? Or as the Japanese author Fumio Sasaki puts it, how “everyone started out as a minimalist.” We come into this world without any belongings or habits. Except for our experiences, we cannot take anything with us into the afterlife. That’s why human beings have an inherent interest in experiencing, not owning. Hoarding does not exist in nature.

When you are born you are pure love, curious and interested in growing. When you live minimalism as a lifestyle, you are just reclaiming this natural state. Because there is already a minimalist in all of us, minimalism is for everyone.

# Minimalism is what you make of it. There are no rigid rules.

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What is minimalism and what is this lifestyle all about? The answer may surprise you: It's up to you. There is no rigid schedule or rules to follow. Minimalism is meant to enrich your life and empowers you to spend a fulfilling lifetime on this planet. It's about focussing on what is really important to you in all aspects of your life and freeing yourself from outside expectations. It's not about only having the magic number of 100 things or owning as little as possible in general.

Maybe you want to commute to work on a city bike, go with your road bike on a ride at the weekend, and go off-road on a mountain bike on vacation. Or it is essential for you to have a large book collection of 5,000 books. This does not necessarily speak against minimalism. If the things around you meet your deepest needs, that doesn't argue against minimalism, it argues for it.

Everyone can create a minimalist lifestyle in the way that makes sense for them. We should follow minimalist principles with ease. Let's be inventors and develop our own minimalist ideas. It's about enjoying the trek along this trail and experiencing this way of life. Minimalism is a fun adventure we all should not miss: It's a journey to ourselves.

- ▶ **Our Recommendation:**  
Fill minimalism with your own beliefs, values, and behaviors.
- ▶ **Ask yourself:**  
What minimalist principles to live by do I enjoy and feel enriched by?
- ▶ **Our Vision:**  
We live in a world full of inventors who develop their own unique minimalist lifestyle.

## Focus on what is essential for you and follow your own star.

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So minimalism is about finding out what is important to your deepest self. What has meaning in your life? How can you design your journey so that it fulfills you? Everyone can just explore for oneself what matters personally. Society and the media have many ideas for us about what might be important to us. With all the noise around us living a self-determined life is a challenge.

Which star shines brightest for you? There are trillions of stars in the universe. Stargaze and choose one luminary for you. If you feel like it, allow yourself to create your own constellation. Listen to your inner voice and go your own path. Reflect regularly. Allow yourself to develop and change. Deal with your values. They are your compass in life.

Consciously spending time with ourselves supports us to feel and hear ourselves. Stillness, silence and solitude from time to time cause inner strength and calm. We should regularly set times when we have nothing specific to do. When all of our time is planned and filled, there is no space for our personal unforeseen thoughts, deep feelings, and unexpected events. Let us lead a self-determined life and do not let ourselves be controlled by the consumer society or the imaginations of others.

**Our Recommendation:**

Focus on what matters to you and feels right.

**Ask yourself:**

Do I make this decision from my deepest inside?

**Our Vision:**

Every single person picked their own fixed star or created a new constellation because there are more than enough stars for everyone in the universe.

## Choosing wisely what you allow in your life leads to ease.

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Imagine you are preparing for a long hike. You pack the backpack you will carry yourself. Of course, with every piece you ask yourself whether you really need it. You want to pack only high-quality things. Do you already know? A loaded backpack should not weigh more than about 10-20 percent of your body weight. So you don't pack unnecessary ballast or things others want you to carry.

You also want your body and mind to be in optimal condition for your long hike. You will nourish your body with healthy food and fresh water. You will make sure that you are fit and have useful skills. You want to be in tune with the world and that you don't have people around you who will put obstacles in your way.

We all should choose wisely who and what we allow to be in our lives. Let us buy only the material things we really need. One benefit is when we have fewer expenses and things that bind us, we are more independent and ultimately can live a freer life.

Let us also reflect on the other areas of our lives. What vibes are surrounding us and what do we consume? If we pay attention to what we feel, think, eat, watch and ask ourselves if this is what we really want and if it will make our life better in the long run we already live a conscious life.

- ▶ **Our Recommendation:**  
Be picky: Make as many consumption decisions as possible with full awareness.
- ▶ **Ask yourself:**  
Does this product or behavior align with my values?
- ▶ **Our Vision:**  
On our journey we meet upbeat people who move along easily and rejoice in life.

## Nourishing basic needs is the highest form of celebrating life.

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Minimalism is asking you the question: How do you handle resources? What do you do with your time, your energy, your money and your love? Your answer to this question has a personal and a social dimension. Your life should be joyful and fulfilling. Consumption is part of that. We all want our basic needs to be met, such as daily nutrition, wardrobe, personal hygiene, personal growth and social participation. The trick is to distinguish between satisfying basic needs and excessive consumption. If we avoid excessive consumption, we can use our resources to nourish our basic needs as best we can.

Let us not fall into the trap of thinking more consumption will make our lives better. Fulfilling artificially created needs does not bring happiness and wastes resources. Especially in Western consumer societies, people don't even use what they buy. For example in the USA, people wear on average only 20-30% of the clothes in their closet. Australians throw away an average of 312 kilograms of food per person a year, which is about 50 percent of their purchases.

Overconsumption only burdens us and distracts us from essentials. So let's avoid excessive consumption as often as possible. This gives us the opportunity to really celebrate everything that we allow to be in our lives. And celebrating life leads to true fulfillment.

- ▶ **Our Recommendation:**  
Keep your life as simple as it feels convenient.
- ▶ **Ask yourself:**  
Does this belong to my basic consumption and if yes, how can I celebrate this?
- ▶ **Our Vision:**  
We all celebrate life together, nourish our genuine needs and find fulfillment in ourselves.

## Use things without owning them and share what you have with others.

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See humanity for what it is: one big community. In a community you share resources. Be thankful for everything you don't have to own by yourself.

It is possible to satisfy your needs and gain experience by using things without owning them, by renting, sharing or borrowing them. You can rent books, toys, dishes for a party, sports equipment, vehicles and accommodations everywhere on earth. Many people are happy to lend you what you need.

One big plus is you don't have to worry about storage and maintenance. On top of that, it will be beneficial for your creativity and social skills. Often it brings you closer to people you share interests and values with. Get creative every time you are tempted to buy something new or replace something. If you don't see any other option than owning something, find out if you can get it used or offer someone to share it with you.

We all should offer our community what we got. Sharing things is caring about resources and how we leave this planet behind. Swedish author Margareta Magnusson uses the concept of "death cleaning" to remind us that our bereaved loved ones will be also grateful if we don't leave an infinite amount of crap behind.

### ▷ **Our Recommendation:**

Avoid owning things completely whenever possible.

### ▷ **Ask yourself:**

Can I rent, share or borrow what I need? What of my belongings can I share?

### ▷ **Our Vision:**

Everyone lives the spirit of community, we stop overproducing and share what humanity has already produced.

## Embracing responsibility inspires to live a proactive and sustainable life.

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We all bear responsibility: for our own lives and social responsibility. We cannot escape this responsibility, even if we ignore it. In this case, we would only make unconscious decisions, which are usually not the best ones. So why not accept the challenge and actively take our lives and actions into our own hands?

Acting socially responsible means, among other things, asking yourself: Who and what do I support with my daily decisions? It is much easier said than done: If something doesn't align with your values, change your actions. But we can start to inform ourselves about the products and services we buy. Everything has an effect. Let us observe our behavior. We decide what effect we achieve with the use of our resources.

We have only one earth. We all have only one life. The resources of the planet and our personal resources are limited. It's beneficial if we embrace finitude as inspiration. Our personal time is our most valuable asset. We do not know how much time we have, only that our body is mortal.

After all, the average life expectancy is currently between 70-75 years globally. The oldest person so far was Frenchwoman Jeanne Louise Calment, who turned 122. If we actively take responsibility for our lives, we can make the best of it, no matter how old we are or get. Let's be proactive.

- ▶ **Our Recommendation:**  
Be aware that every action has an effect.
- ▶ **Ask yourself:**  
What effect do my actions and behaviors have on myself, other beings and our planet?
- ▶ **Our Vision:**  
There is a spirit of awareness and mindfulness in our societies.



## Appreciating resources is beneficial overall and creates more justice.

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On your hike, you want to enjoy pure nature and move forward in harmony with the environment. You don't want trash on the side of the trail and you will not litter.

The economy is increasingly creating an atmosphere of glut in Western societies. This leads to the fact that we live in a throw-away society. Resources are not treated with care. We are often not even aware that we can only live at this level because we live in a system of exploitation.

We exploit other people, animals and nature in order to be able to buy cheap products and live this life. We don't usually pay the actual price for products because others pay a cut for us.

Someone has to pick up your trash along the way, and someone has to take care of all the things you leave behind on this planet. The minimum we can do is to handle resources with care.

Let's do our best to reduce our waste to a minimum: let's stop buying useless stuff, let's handle food with appreciation and let's reuse packaging. With a little creativity and skill, some things can be reused or given a new purpose. We should keep in mind: resources are connected. If we handle things with care, we also do not waste our money, our time, our attention, and any of our other means.

- ▶ **Our Recommendation:**  
Value what you have and don't waste resources. Don't clutter up neither your mind nor the environment.
- ▶ **Ask yourself:**  
How do I use my resources?
- ▶ **Our Vision:**  
We all focus on collecting experiences and knowledge and leave the world one day as we came into it: as minimalists.

## Mindful communication is the key to respect yourself and other beings.

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The superpower of humans is our diverse communication skill set. Let's use it for good. The biggest gift you can give to someone is to talk openly, attentively, respectful and warm-hearted with them. This includes yourself. Be kind to yourself. Be kind to other beings. Be kind to the earth.

With all your words and actions you have an impact on yourself, on someone else or on something else. Take time for yourself and reflect on all your thoughts and actions. How do you manage your time? What do you pay attention to and focus on? Do you really spend it on what is sustainably important to you? Don't feel guilty if you don't, but start adjusting your habits if necessary. What would you recommend to your best friend?

When we interact with others, let us be empathetic and always try to put ourselves in their shoes. We can avoid resistance and drama. We should create win-win situations and be a pleasant contact, whether it's a private or professional. In this way, we treat the resources of others with respect and contribute to a harmonious atmosphere in society.

Yes, respect is related to minimalism as a lifestyle. It makes your life and the lives of others uplifting and easier.

- ▶ **Our Recommendation:**  
Treat yourself, other beings and the environment with respect.
- ▶ **Ask yourself:**  
How do I encounter other people, animals and my fellow world?
- ▶ **Our Vision:**  
We live in a world where respect, love, goodwill and appreciation are the highest values.

## Asking questions can cause that you want to buck the trend.

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Have you ever noticed that sometimes circumstances are quite different when you really look into it? That green brand isn't quite as sustainable, that superfood isn't quite as healthy, and that tourist attraction isn't quite as authentic. In our world, a lot of information is distorted because of money interests. Therefore, the purposeful use of one's money is not only an act of self-determination, but also a political act.

It is usually not possible to act completely responsibly and always sustainably. But you can start to question things and not blindly follow the masses. To do this, it is important to feel yourself and think for yourself. What is good for me? What is my own true opinion about the latest trend? We can supplement our feelings with information.

Have you ever thought about alternatives for the products and services you use? In the mainstream, people often only pay high prices because large companies have a high marketing budget that they pass on to products. Be aware of this and consider not making big companies even richer. There are many reasons to empower smaller and alternative businesses.



### **Our Recommendation:**

Prioritize information over entertainment and do research about things you buy and do.



### **Ask yourself:**

Do I have background information about the products and services I use?



### **Our Vision:**

We live in harmony with ourselves, our values, feelings and fellow human beings.

## Turn off your devices and enjoy being offline as often as possible.

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Many things we regularly do have an impact on natural resources and our personal skills. It helps us feel our self-efficacy if we consciously refrain from using devices as a crutch every now and then. Imagine till 100 years ago people lived a life independent from all these devices which surround us today.

In 2022 the average person spends 44% of their waking hours looking at a screen connected to the internet. People in South Africa, Philippines, Brazil and in Colombia are the most active users: their screen time is more than 10 hours a day.

We should allow ourselves to do something different for a change. Let us put in a cell phone-free day, try to find a way without a navigation device, do a calculation on paper, remember a phone number in addition to just saving it digitally, use a bike for a route or sweep instead of vacuuming.

Let us be like MacGyver and find solutions. We should make sure that our brain powers stay sharp and our craft skills don't completely atrophy, so that we can find solutions independent of devices. A part of this is avoiding multitasking and not doing things at the same time when we are talking to someone. Let us focus 100% on every conversation and every activity. Let us live offline and limit our screentime. Let us live here and now.

- ▷ **Our Recommendation:**  
Use as few devices as possible.
- ▷ **Ask yourself:**  
Can I find a solution for this issue that does not involve any technical device?
- ▷ **Our Vision:**  
We choose reality over virtual reality. We are present.

## Surround yourself with like-minded people and spread minimalism.

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If we teleport ourselves mentally into space and take a look at our planet, we see that humanity is a large community that shares a common habitat and similar interests.

For us humans, interacting with others is just as important as being alone in order to grow. So let's allow ourselves to be alone whenever possible. But we should also strive to make our communities a livable and interesting place, interact with each other and seek exchange on ideas that move us.

We can spread minimalism as a lifestyle and inspire others, which in turn gives us valuable impulses. Discussing minimalist principles and approaches also motivates us to go further and moves us forward in our own understanding. With our actions, we act as a role model. Let's tell people we are in touch with about minimalism and pave the way for a sustainable and minimalist future for all of us.

Let's build an international minimalism community. Get involved and take action. Deep connections with like-minded people enrich our lives in the here and now.

Minimalism as a lifestyle creates a better life for you and for our planet. We can create a more powerful and conscious world for ourselves and future generations.

- ▶ **Our Recommendation:**  
Seek for resonance with yourself and exchange with others.
- ▶ **Ask yourself:**  
Where and how can I get inspired and inspire others?
- ▶ **Our Vision:**  
People realize they are connected, inspire and lift each other up.

# Thank you for reading the Minimalism Manifesto!

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Did you notice that all the 11 principles are related? The minimalist perspective opens up a new universe. I wish you a minimalist adventure as exciting as the one I am experiencing.

I am very happy to discuss the Minimalism Manifesto with you. Send me your feedback. Let's keep updating the principles together. If you support the Manifesto you are welcome to spread it and sign it on the website [www.minimalism.community](http://www.minimalism.community).

Jasmin Mittag

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