Transcript

INTRODUCTION

00:00 Welcome back to the English with Rhys podcast. My name is Rhys, I'm a master's-level English teacher from the UK, and I'm here to help you level up your English.

So, in today's episode, we're gonna be talking about minimalism, a lifestyle where you live with as few items as possible, only focussing on the things that you need. We'll be talking about why people do it, how they do it, and what affect it can have on your life.

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01:00 someone else has said.

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MAIN PART

Over the past ten years or so, I've been working hard to become a better minimalist. That means that I want to organise and simplify my life. It includes

everything from the things I own to the files on my computer. Even to the thoughts in my mind. But the more I simplify, the harder it becomes. The goalposts seem to move further and further away. I'll talk about that a little bit more later on.

02:00   But first, let's properly define minimalism. Minimalism is a way of living where you reduce the number of possessions you have, you remove distractions in your life, you declutter your home, and you simplify things wherever possible. It's a way of living with intention and purpose.

People who practice minimalism, known as minimalists, do it to make their lives easier to manage, to save time on cleaning and maintaining things, to focus on the important things like relationships and passions, to reduce their impact on the environment, to save money, to travel, and to reduce stress and clear their minds.

My reasons for embracing minimalism are very similar. During my 20s, I've moved around a lot, going from country to country to job to job. As a result, the

03:00   amount of things I own has always been on my mind. I also have plans to buy a house someday, so saving money has been is always important to me, as I'm sure it is for you too.

However, the most significant reason that I follow minimalism is because, without it, my mind becomes chaotic. When I live in a cluttered space, surrounded by things scattered around with no place to go, or perhaps they're too big for the room, I feel uncomfortable and I find it difficult to relax.

So, let's start there with the topic of possessions, the things you own. This is where most people start their minimalism journey, and they often follow something called the KonMari Method.

04:00 So, the KonMari Method is names after Marie Kondo who is a professional tidier from Japan. She's written four books and even has a Netflix show which introduces people to this way of thinking.

But it's a little bit different. Marie Kondo emphasises that her method isn't strictly minimalism. While minimalism encourages living with fewer possessions, the KonMari Method is more about living with only the items that you truly love or you truly need. So, there's kind of a balance to make.

So, let's start with clothing. I first realised that I lived with too many clothes when I left home for university. Moving all of my belongings into my dad's car and then into my new apartment showed me that I had too many things. It was a struggle to fit everything in.

05:00 I knew this was a problem, so I decided I would take action. I made my bed and placed all of my clothes on it, putting my dirty clothes to one side, of course. Gathering all my clothes in one space helped me to visualise the task ahead and what needed to be done.

I went through each piece of clothing one by one, reflecting on the last time I wore each item. Firstly, I set aside the items that I knew I never wore. Some of

these items were gifts and I'd only kept them because I'd feel guilty if I threw them away. But I needed the space.

Next, I asked myself which pieces of clothing brought me joy and I removed everything else. Sometimes I wasn't exactly sure if I liked a piece of clothing, so I'd put it on and stand in the mirror and see whether I liked the look.

06:00   Interestingly, it can be an emotional experience to let go of some things, especially if they've been with us for a while, were gifts, or they hold some kind of sentimental value. Marie Kondo suggests thanking each item you get rid of, literally saying "Thank you" to your skirt, for example, would help to make you feel much better. My own trick is to look through old photos and see whether I've worn the piece of clothing or I'm holding the item or something in an old photo. That way, I can revisit the memory.

Once I'd gone through all of my clothes, I had a sizeable pile ready to donate to a charity shop, but it still seemed like I'd barely made a dent. Somehow, I had to do more. That's when I discovered the method of hanging everything backwards.

07:00   So, I started by hanging all of my clothes backwards in my wardrobe and then, as I wore each item, I'd put it back on the correct way. After about two months, I realised what I wore and what I didn't wear.

Gradually, I've been working towards building a wardrobe where every item matches with each other. Any t-shirt that I pick up will match any trousers that I pick up. I've also intentionally kept my clothing selection minimal. I don't need

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that many clothes. I just have enough clothes now for eight days which means I need to do laundry once a week.

While I'm not the most fashionable guy in the world, I have picked up some fashion tips over the years. The best fashion advice I've ever received is that black and white go with everything. So, you should make those your base colours.

08:00

These days, I'm almost at the point of having a uniform. You probably see in my videos, I'm always wearing a white polo or a white t-shirt, and that's not by mistake. I have one type of shirt, one type of underwear, one type of sock, and so on. And I understand that this level of minimalism is a bit extreme for most people but, for me, it helps me every morning. I don't take any time to decide which clothes to wear. I just take clothes out of the wardrobe. And that stops me from starting the day off on the wrong foot.

Next up, I turned my attention to my book collection. I realised that I'd collected so many of these heavy things, most of which I hadn't even read. And for the ones I had read, I was unlikely to read them again. So, why did I still have them?

09:00

I followed the same process as before. I kept the books that I loved and I donated the rest. But then, as time went on, I took it even further. I questioned why I was holding onto all these physical books when e-books exist.

Now, these days I don't own any physical books at all, but I'm always reading something on my phone or on my laptop. By embracing e-books, I have access to a wide range of reading materials without the physical clutter.

DVDs were a bit more challenging. Back in the early 2010s, I had hundreds of them. Netflix and other streaming services were more limited than they are today; you couldn't watch whatever you wanted. So, having DVDs was a must.

10:00   They also made me very popular in my university halls because I hosted film nights, and I also enjoyed collecting them. But, of course, I had this minimalist bug and it was growing, and I had to do something.

That's when I had a realisation. I could buy the DVD I wanted to watch online, then I'd watch it, and then I'd sell it. A little bit like renting but the only cost I had was the postage.

Now, of course, as time's gone on, DVDs have become largely a thing of the past, but I still use this method with video games.

Next, I turned my attention to my papers. I was a university student so I had a lot of coursework, a lot of notes, a lot of handouts. And I also had apartment contracts, certificates, and bills. So, I took everything and I organised them into

11:00   different categories. I went through one one by one and I decided which ones I needed, which ones could be scanned and discarded, and which ones I needed to keep an original copy of.

And in the end, I only kept a few items which I put into a nice little folder. Everything else was either shredded or recycled. Going forward, I make sure to immediately type my all of my notes into my computer or my phone. Or, if I have to write something on paper, I'll type that up later and then recycle the paper.

I found a lot of satisfaction in this process, and, to be honest, I felt a little bit saddened that I'd already completed the major parts of decluttering. This minimalism bug I had didn't die, it continued to grow, and then I started looking at everything in my life with a critical eye. What's in this drawer? Do I need two of these? Can this be thrown away? These were the everyday questions I was asking myself.

12:00

My real challenge came when I reached my sentimental items. These are things from your childhood or perhaps from a loved one who has since passed away. If you're here for advice on what to do with your sentimental items, I'm afraid I don't have any. But, I can tell you about one sentimental item that I decluttered and what affect it had on me.

So, I was a child, around eight or nine years old, and I visited a shop with my grandparents. That's when I saw it. A fluffy Pikachu backpack. It even had a compartment inside to put my Pokémon cards in. It was perfect.

This bag made a lasting impression on me, and I still remember, to this day, all of its little details. But, as I grew older, I felt a bit conflicted about keeping this child's backpack on display in my bedroom, so it put it into a cupboard where it stayed for many, many years.

13:00

I briefly reintroduced it to my bedroom when I moved to university for nostalgia reasons. But soon after, it returned to the cupboard.

When I experienced my quarter-life crisis, which I talk about in episode one, I needed to find ways to calm my mind more than ever. Additionally, I was preparing to move abroad and I needed to downsize my belongings. I decided to keep one cupboard in my childhood home to keep the important things that I didn't need to take abroad, and I had to make some tough decisions.

14:00 It was time for my Pikachu backpack to bring joy to someone else. With a heavy heart, I took it out of the cupboard one last time. I held it in my hands, I looked at all of its little details and, in my mind, I thanked it for happiness that it brought me. Then, I carefully packed it away, looked at it one last time, and donated it to a charity shop.

Sometimes, even now, I still think about my Pikachu backpack and I wonder whether I made the right decision. I think, if I had the chance again, I would give that backpack to a child in my family. That way, I'd still have some kind of connection to it and could see it being enjoyed by someone I love.

15:00 It's funny how something as silly as a children's 99p backpack can hold such sentimental value. But this experience taught me to be more mindful about my purchases and now, going forward, I think long and hard about every purchase I make.

AD BREAK

16:24   Let's move onto digital minimalism, which involves organising your email, your

apps, your social media, and your files. I began with my email.

There was a time where I allowed my emails to pile up. I didn't delete anything,

and I'm sure I had thousands of emails in my inbox at one point. I was never

really happy about this but the problem just seemed overwhelming. Like, it was

too much to deal with.

17:00   So, to tackle this, I eventually made a start by unsubscribing from every new thing

that came into my inbox. I realised that, while I didn't want to go through every

email, I could at least stop the problem from getting any worse.

Then, after that, whenever I had a little bit of free time, I'd go through a couple of

pages in my inbox. I'd select everything and then deselect only the emails I

wanted to keep. And surprisingly, I didn't want to keep many.

Eventually, I took a few hours to just go through everything and I ended up with

just a few emails. There were some things that I needed to keep but the

conversation was finished. So, I saved those as a PDF and then delete the

email.

Nowadays, I try to keep my inbox as empty as possible. And right now, for

example, I only have four emails in there and they're all ongoing conversations.

18:00   Next on my list was tackling social media. I was aware of its negative impact on

my mental health, but I also wanted to stay connected with friends. It was going

to be a challenging task.

I joined Facebook when I was around thirteen and, back then, I didn't pay much

attention to what I was posting. Every thought I had and every picture I took was

uploaded. And my comments and likes were all over the place. It amounted to

tens of thousands of items that I needed to address. I needed a better approach.

The only thing I really cared about keeping were my photos, but I didn't

necessarily want them to be public. So, I went through my own photos, I

downloaded the photos I wanted to keep, and then I deleted everything. Then, I

went through every photo I was tagged in, downloaded the ones I wanted to keep

19:00   again, and untagged myself in everything.

Afterwards, I just needed my posts, comments, and likes to be gone. I found an

app in the end that could assist me. It took some time, but eventually, my profile

was empty. All my posts, likes, and comments were gone. All I had left was my

face, my name, and my friends list.

Luckily, Facebook has an app just for messaging, so I never used Facebook

again and I only use the messaging app. I also deleted all my conversations in

there and started treating it like my email inbox. If the conversation was finished,

I deleted the conversation.

Then, I did a similar thing with all of my other social medias, only keeping the ones that I wanted to keep and, eventually, I even went into my Google Chrome settings to see a big list of all of my login details. I went through all the websites

20:00 that I didn't want to keep an account on, and I deleted my accounts. And then, I started to feel a lot freer and a lot more private than I used to.

Next, I moved my attention to my apps. Now, I didn't have many apps except for, maybe, some pre-installed apps that are difficult to delete.

So, I ended up teaching myself a little bit about how to use my phone as a developer and I eventually found a way to delete those apps. Then, I switched my phone to black and white so it would be less enticing to use.

All that remained was my digital files. I've always been somewhat organised in this area, but I've never been perfect. Although now, I am getting close.

So, for a start, I make sure to keep nothing on my phone. If I download

21:00 something or I take a picture, I send it to my laptop and I delete it from the phone. This way, everything is in one place. But I also have the Google Drive app on my phone, and I sync Google Drive with my laptop. So, whether I use my laptop or my phone, I can see all of my files in the same place.

On my laptop, my Downloads and my Music folders are always empty. If I download something, I move it to the correct folder. As for music, I just stream everything now. I don't have any music on my laptop. So, I just hid that folder.

Organising my Pictures folder has been an ongoing task for me. I've organised everything into years, and in each year, I've organised into months, and in each month, into events or places. I even have a folder for photos taken before I was born.

22:00 Over the years, I've dedicated a significant amount of time to going through each and every photo, carefully selecting the ones I want to keep. I also make necessary adjustments, like rotating a photo or editing out scan lines and things like that.

Additionally, I store holiday videos in these folders. So, if I could, I'd rename *Pictures* to *Memories* to better reflect its contents.

As for my documents, I've organised them into four folders. The first is labelled *Education and Employment History*, where I keep things like my university files, my CV, references, and other related documents.

The second folder is called *Home, Life, and Belongings*, which contains important documents such as my apartment contract, health-related files, receipts, and

23:00 manuals for my appliances. I've made scanned copies of everything so it's all accessible in his folder.

The third folder is called *Work*, where I use for everything related to English with Rhys. This includes lesson plans, financial documents, scripts, and so on.

Lastly, I have a *Recipes* folder, which is my newest addition. I have a system to organise my recipes and shopping list. I made a template for my recipes so that, when I find a recipe I like, I can just take out the important bits and put it in the template so it's easy to read later. Then, I can just copy the ingredients from the recipe and paste it into my shopping list which I keep on Google Keep. This way, I can share it with my partner and we can both add and remove items as we need.

24:00   Google Keep has actually been incredibly helpful in keeping my mind organised. I use it to store my to-do list, my shopping list, my gift ideas, and even my ideas for English with Rhys. Additionally, I also make sure that upcoming plans are all in my digital calendar along with my work schedule, holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries.

For me, it's important not to burden my mind with unnecessary information for a long time. By using digital tools to keep track of these things for me, I free up my brain which helps me to feel calmer through the day and sleep better at night.

IN CONCLUSION

When it comes to minimalism and decluttering, everyone's journey is unique. The decisions you make should be based on your own circumstances and feelings. Trust your instincts and continue creating an environment that suits

25:00   your well-being. You don't have to do it the same way as me, and you don't even have to do minimalism if you don't want to.

Minimalism is attractive for people who feel like their lives are out of control. Despite being an organised person with few possessions, I never feel like I've fully finished. Every time I get closer to my goal, I find something else to organise, or a new way to simplify. I remove logos from my items which sometimes damages them, I delete files that I end up needing later on, and sometimes I make things much more difficult than they need to be.

If you follow a similar path, you must be careful. Finding a way to say, "This is enough" is important. Setting boundaries can help you to prevent the obsessive pursuit of minimalism that I am stuck with.

26:00   Now let's go through some of the key phrases from today's episode.

Firstly, I talked about how I don't need to choose what I wear in the morning, and that stops me from starting the day off on the wrong foot. And that's our phrase, 'to start off on the wrong foot'. That means to begin something in a bad way, or to begin with a mistake.

For example, "I wanted to impress my new boss today, but I spilled coffee on her on my first day, starting off on the wrong foot".

Next, I said that minimalism can also be challenging because the goalposts seem to move further and further away as I progress. Our phrase here is 'move the goalposts'. This means to change the rules while someone is trying to do something in order to make it more difficult for them.

27:00 So, for me, as I get closer to minimalism, the goal is moving too. I can never actually reach the goal because it's always changing.

Here's another example, "The company promised me a raise, but now they are moving the goalposts by introducing new performance standards".

I also said that once I'd gone through all of my clothes, I had a sizeable pile but it looked like I'd barely made a dent. Our phrase here, 'Make a dent', means to decrease something slightly, just a little bit.

For me, it looked like I *hadn't* made a dent; it looked like I hadn't made the pile smaller at all. But here's a positive use of the example: "The recent government policies have made a dent in reducing unemployment rates, resulting in more job
28:00 opportunities".

And lastly, when I talked about Facebook, I said that every thought and photo was posted; and every comment and like was all over the place. In other words, these things are disorganised and in a confusing state. They were 'all over the place'.

Here's another example, "His emotions were all over the place when he received the surprising news".

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Serious and Dedicated learners.

And lastly, before I go, I would love to give a big shout out to my dedicated students. That's Carlos Gonzalez, and Jean Nxumalo. Thank you so much for your support.

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