

Story Block: *Simplicity*

*Exploring the art and
science of Simplicity*



in partnership with

HOLSTEE

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Simplicity is a topic that I have had an on and off relationship with. I am drawn to it in theory and yet in practice it remains elusive. Modern life and our social structures seem to be built on the ethos that more, larger, newer, shinier or faster is always better.

My initial fascination with studying economics started around the efficient allocation of scarce resources. Since then, I have been fascinated with concepts around choices, trade-offs, freedom, minimalism and recently the FIRE movement. It also strikes me as a bit strange how complicated it is to explain simplicity.

Ultimately, I believe these choices are very personal and unique to each individual.

This month, I want to share the wisdom story of the Mexican Fisherman, a poem by Edgar Guest and a TED Talk I first saw in 2014 and haven't forgotten. I understand these will not resonate with everyone, but my hope is that it will allow you space to consider what is most important in your life and maybe think about things from a different perspective, even if just for a moment.

Life is easy. Why do we make it so hard? | Jon Jandai
Watch the Video [HERE](#)

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Mexican Fisher and The MBA

An American investment banker was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were three large yellowfin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them.

The Mexican replied, “only a little while. The American then asked why didn’t he stay out longer and catch more fish? The Mexican said he had enough to support his family’s immediate needs. The American then asked, “but what do you do with the rest of your time?”

The Mexican fisherman said, “I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siestas with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine, and play guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life.”

The American scoffed, “I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat, you could buy several boats, eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing, and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then LA and eventually New York City, where you will run your expanding enterprise.”

The Mexican fisherman asked, “But, how long will this all take?”

To which the American replied, “15 – 20 years.”

“But what then?” Asked the Mexican.

The American laughed and said, “That’s the best part. When the time is right you would announce an IPO and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich, you would make millions!”

“Millions – then what?”

The American said, “Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siestas with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos.”

Think Happy Thoughts!

Think sunshine all the day;
Refuse to let the trifling worries stay,
Crowd them with thoughts of laughter from your mind.

Think of the good, forget the bad you find,
Think of the sun behind the clouds; the blue
And not the gray skies that you view.
Think of the kindness not the meanness shown,
The true friends not the false ones you have known;
The joy and not the hatred of the strife,
The sweetness not the bitterness of life.
Think happy thoughts!

Think happy thoughts!
Think always of the best,
Think of the ones you love, not those that you detest;
Think of your victories and not your failures here,
The smile that pleased and not the hurtful sneer,
The kindly word and not the harsh word spoken,
The promise kept and not the promise broken;
The good that you have known and not the bad,
The happy days that were and not the sad;
Think of the rose and not the withered flower,
The beauty of the rainbow, not the shower.
Think happy thoughts!

Think happy thoughts!
This is true happiness!
That life is sad that feeds on its distress;
That mind is gloomy that subsists on gloom,
And is as dismal as a curtained room,
Where daily comes the sunshine, but to find
It cannot enter through the close-drawn blind.
Fling up the curtains of your mind today
And let the morning sunshine in to play;
Dwell on the joys and not the sorrows here,
Master your thoughts and you have mastered fear.
Think happy thoughts.

-Edgar Albert Guest

Simplicity

Every morning we get a chance to start from scratch. To really taste the sunrise and hear our unfiltered and natural thoughts.

The world is open, alive and free — and so are we when we embrace simplicity.

HOLSTEE

Simplicity *noun*

sim·plic·i·ty | \sim-'pli-sə-tē

The state of being simple, uncomplicated, or uncompounded.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary © 2020

In this guide, we explore how Simplicity can be applied to all aspects of our lives — like how we spend our time, make commitments, and prioritize possessions.

On the following pages, we share poetry, philosophy, and a range of activities targeted toward providing insight and ideas for how to live a simpler life.

Dive into the modern teachings and scientific findings of Leo Babauta, Marie Kondo, and Cal Newport — just to name a few. Learn how to alleviate time scarcity, minimize clutter, and positively focus your digital activities.

Use this guide as a tool to shine a spotlight on what brings the most meaning and happiness to your life.



“All we can do is one thing at a time.
All we have is this moment, this day.
And it is enough. It is beautiful, incredible,
if we just really see it and appreciate it.”

LEO BABAUTA



Simplify Commitments

“A simple life has a different meaning and a different value for every person. For me, it means eliminating all but the essential, eschewing chaos for peace, and spending your time doing what’s important to you.

LEO BABAUTA

According to Leo Babauta, philosopher and Founder of *Zen Habits*, we need to find ways to simplify our daily commitments in order to truly connect to our personal and spiritual goals. Babauta suggests making a list of daily obligations so that we can easily determine what is essential.

Let’s try this by listing our recurring commitments.

Put a ☆ next to any that **bring you joy**.

Underline any that **directly contribute to your goals**.

Highlight the ones that **take the most time**.

Work:

01

Family:

02

Friends:

03

Health:

04

Which of these daily commitments do you want to let go of?



“I am beginning to learn that it is
the sweet, simple things in life
which are the real ones after all.”

LAURA INGALLS WILDER



Thought Starter

At the end of each day, how often do you feel accomplished and at ease? That you checked everything off your list, got enough sleep, fulfilled all familial and social obligations, read, exercised, ate well, kept your home in order, and didn't feel stressed about time? For many of us, the answer is *rarely, if ever*.

This pressure is what [Leo Babauta](#) calls the **Time Scarcity Demon**. Babauta writes:

The problem isn't that we have too little time – we all get the same amount of time each day and each week. It's the exact right amount of time, because it's all there is. It's possible that we have too many things to do. But actually the real problem is that we want to do too much in the time we have.

Babauta believes we can do a number of things to change our circumstances: We can prioritize (we'll get to that in a little bit), ask for help, or delegate tasks. But really mastering the Time Scarcity Demon comes from shifting our mindset, and he looks to Buddhism to help us do so.

He identifies this need to do more and to have more as a form of **greed (lobha)**, and encourages us to answer this greed – and the challenges of the Time Scarcity Demon – with its antidote: **generosity (dāna)**.

Lobha • Greed

One of the **Three Unwholesome Roots (akusala-mūla)**, greed is our insatiable desire for more.

It's our impulse, attachment, and obsession with obtaining something always beyond our reach, whether that's a goal, status, material object, or wealth. Greed leads us to feel as though our fulfillment depends on achieving or gaining something.

Dāna • Generosity

We cultivate a practice of generosity to free us from the feeling of scarcity. **This state of mind is a release of the attachment we have to material things and outcomes.** This form of generosity is less about giving material things (though that's an important aspect of dāna), and more about being generous with our time, thoughts, wisdom, and energy. With this mindset, we give a moment our direct focus instead of obsessing about what is next, detaching from the pressure to do and have more.

Establishing this mindset often requires a major shift in perspective, fundamentally changing our relationship with time and those around us. **Take a moment to reflect on how you might bring this generous state of mind into your daily life.**



“It’s not the daily increase
but daily decrease. Hack away
at the unessential.”

BRUCE LEE



Weekly Challenge

Spend one day each week decluttering your home.

When it comes to minimizing, we love Marie Kondo's tips for simplifying, organizing, and removing excess. For this challenge, we recommend reading her book if you haven't already, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. In the book, Kondo addresses each category of things in your home, down to the specifics of how to fold (or more specifically **not** fold) your socks.

Here are some tips to get you started:

- 1. Start with one category of things and make a pile in the middle of the room.** Kondo encourages starting with a category instead of a whole room or closet, and then identifying subcategories within it. So for clothing, you would start with your socks — from every season and activity — and make a big pile.
- 2. Pick up one item at time and ask yourself: Does this bring me joy?** If the answer is a definite yes, hold onto it. If not, place it in a box to donate.

Commitment Issues? Kondo may not approve this advice, but if you are really uncertain about an item, stick it in a box, seal it, and put it away ideally somewhere inconvenient but not impossible to access. Six months later, if you haven't found yourself seeking out that item, you know you can remove it from your life.

- 3. Treat it as multiple sets of sprints, rather than one long marathon.**
This exercise can be challenging at times, but it helps to do it in small bursts instead of taking on your whole house at once.

List the categories you want to tackle each week and place a ✓ in the box when you've complete it!

WEEK 01	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEEK 02	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEEK 03	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEEK 04	<input type="checkbox"/>

Way to go!



“It is not enough to be busy;
so are the ants. The question is:
What are we busy about?”

HENRY DAVID THOREAU



Reflect & Discuss

Use these questions for self-reflection or to spark meaningful conversations.

ICEBREAKERS

What makes you smile?

01

What area of your life needs the most simplifying?

02

What do you feel are the pros and cons of a minimalist life?

03

DEEPER QUESTIONS

What in your life is most essential to your happiness?

01

Who in your life can help simplify seemingly complex moments?

02

If there is an afterlife or reincarnation, what one memory from this life would you bring with you?

03

What are you holding onto that you need to let go of?

04



“Simplicity, patience, compassion. These three are your greatest treasures. Simple in actions and thoughts, you return to the source of being. Patient with both friends and enemies, you accord with the way things are. Compassionate toward yourself, you reconcile all beings in the world.

L A O T Z U

