

Ep #128: Minimalism



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

Welcome to the Life Coach School Podcast where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching. Now, your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Hey, my friends. Here's the deal. I recorded a whole podcast on minimalism, and then Pavel who is my podcast dude, who takes care of me, sent me an email and basically said that the audio didn't record very well. I decided to rerecord it.

I want to share with you guys something because it had such an amazing influence on my own life and it just I think goes along with our theme of minimalism. I, as you know, teach in person coach trainings to train people to become life coaches. One of my students that I had in my Life Coach's trainings whose name is Rachel Hart, and she's an amazing coach. She coaches people who want to give up drinking, cut back or give up on drinking.

She and I talk a lot because I have my Stop Overdrinking program and membership that I offer, and she takes it to the next level by offering one-on-one coaching for people that ... just one-on-one with someone because they need their own personal work for an hour every week. If you are that person and you want someone, or maybe you've emailed me and asked me if I could do it, Rachel Hart is your person. Go check her out at rachelhart.com.

The reason that I bring her up is she, as one of my students, said two things to me that changed my life. The first thing that she said to me is when I first met her I was still drinking chardonnay and she was not drinking at all, and she said "my life is so much better without drinking, so much better." I believed her. She wasn't saying it in a way like "oh I can't drink and I wish I could" at all. She was basically saying "no, life is better not drinking."

I had never heard that before or believed anyone that had said that. I will never forget her saying that. I will never forget where she was sitting in the room. I'll never forget how much it impacted me in that moment. It was like one of those bells that rings in your head. The second thing that she said during that training is she shared a story with the class about someone, and hopefully I remember the details, but this is my recollection of her story, so what matters is the story I

tell myself and how it helps me in my life.

Basically, she told a story about how she used to work for a woman who taught her that if something had to be redone, that it was always better the second time. Anytime you lose a document and you have to redo it, or the audio on something doesn't work and you have to redo it, that it doesn't matter because it's always better the second time. You shouldn't spend a lot of time trying to recover the lost one and you shouldn't get upset and create a story of doom around. You should just get busy on the next one because it will be better. She went through the training last year.

I can't even tell you how many times I have lost an original of something and had to redo it since then, and I have followed that advice of her coworker every time. I don't mess around, I don't worry about it, I don't think it wasn't meant to happen, I just get to work on the next one. The fact that I'm sharing those two things with you has already made this podcast better. The fact that I've introduced you to Rachel and shown you that you never really know where you're going to get the most profound wisdom in your life, and someone may just make an offhanded comment that really impacts you.

The fact that she was willing to speak up in class and share her insight and talk about herself really has genuinely changed my life in a powerful way. Thank you Rachel, and I'm so glad that I get to share it with all of you. Now we are doing the round two of minimalism, and it will be short, it will be a minimalist episode so to speak. I'm going to share with you my thoughts on minimalism and how I apply them to my house, to my work and to my eating, because those are the most impactful ways that I use minimalism.

A lot of people when they think that someone is called a minimalist it means that they don't make a lot of money and that they're frugal. Those are the two main misconceptions about minimalism. Minimalism does not mean necessarily that you're frugal. It may mean that but those are not interchangeable terms. It most definitely doesn't mean that you don't make a lot of money. What minimalism means is that you remove the excess from your life so that the things that you have in your life are all high quality, high valuable things. The things that you think about, the things that you focus on, the stuff that

surrounds you is all the most important stuff. All the stuff that you most love. I highly recommend this in your life.

Let's start with your house. My brother came to my house recently and said to me "Oh my gosh, where is all of your stuff? Where's all your clutter? How do you keep your house so pristine?" I told him, I said I'm a minimalist. One of the ways that I've done that is I watched this show, you guys might have heard of it, it's called the Clean Sweep. It's a great show, and basically what they do is they go through people's houses and help them get rid of clutter. They take every single thing out of the house, clean the house, and then you only put back in the house what is useful, valuable or that you love. Something that is valuable to you personally, not valuable monetarily wise.

I had that idea. My family and I, we took a yearlong trip, and we sold everything we owned when we went on that trip. The only thing we kept is what could fit into a foot locker, or what could fit into our van for our trip, otherwise we sold it. When we came back from our trip and we bought a house, and we were moving back into our house, I had the same idea about that show that I had seen, that Clean Sweep. I only want to bring back into my house things that are really useful, really valuable and that I love.

When we went about replacing everything that we owned we were very careful not to buy anything in excess. Even today we don't buy anything that will clutter up our home just to have stuff in our home. We don't buy a lot of knickknacks and decorations just for the sake of having decorations around the house. We want everything to be very clean and very minimalist. I have pictures in the home that I love, I have furniture in the home that I love, but otherwise it's a very minimalist house.

The other place that I really focused on being a minimalist is with my clothes. When you think about clothes and you think about being a minimalist it doesn't mean that I buy clothes that are used, and it doesn't mean that I don't buy expensive clothes. I buy expensive clothes, I buy clothes from, you guys know White House Black Market, that's my main place where I buy clothes. I make sure that everything is something that fits me really nice, something that I really

love.

Every year I take a look and make sure that I still really love it, and that it's useful, it feels comfortable on my body and it makes sense for my lifestyle. That is how I utilize clothes. I have a very, very small closet. When I first moved out of my house and went on our trip, we had a 4,200 square foot house, and now we live in a 2,000 something square foot house. I don't know the exact square footage but it's much smaller and my closet is very small.

I love it though because everything in that closet is something that is usable, that I love, that fits me. I highly recommend that you go through that process, and I've talked to you guys about this before, where you take everything out of your closet and only put back the stuff that is useful. I find that excess stuff in our lives weighs us down. It makes us make too many decisions. It's like, if you think about your weight on the scale and how much you own in terms of mass on your body. I also like to think about that in terms of your possessions in the world. The more you own, the more mass you have, the heavier you are going to feel.

My philosophy is you buy very high quality things, you buy one of them unless it's necessary that you buy a couple, you only have one of everything that really works. If you go in your kitchen cabinet right now, why do you need three stirring spoons of the exact same wood? You don't. Get rid of two of them. Just have one. All of a sudden you value that one spoon so much more than if you have three. That's when it comes to the house and to the closet.

The other thing that I do is I go through my refrigerator and my pantry, and I keep a very minimalist refrigerator and pantry, which means everything in there is fresh. It's eatable. It's presentable. I don't put a lot of stuff wrapped in thin foils that you don't know what it is and you don't know how long it's been there, and I don't have a lot of old condiments that have been in there for years. When I look in my closet I use glass bowls for my leftovers or for prepared meals. I have everything very organized in there, and at any point you could grab anything out of that fridge and it would be eatable, usable. As soon as I see something in there that it doesn't look lovely, it doesn't look fresh, it doesn't look eatable, I remove it.

That's the same with my pantry. I don't have canned pumpkin from thanksgiving in my pantry. I donate all of that stuff. Anything that isn't something that I would use today or this week I try not to keep it tucked away. I don't have a lot of old spices in my cupboard. I try to keep everything to be on purpose. I don't want to say "I don't know why that's there." If there are things in your house, and in your fridge and in your life where you go "I don't know why we have that. I don't know why that's there." I feel like that creates unneeded confusion in your life, unneeded clutter, unneeded stuff.

The next way that I use minimalism is with the food that I eat and my weight. I find it very comforting to have a very clear idea of the kinds of foods that I allow in my body. I have a protocol, which means I have a conscious decision about the kinds of foods that are available to me for fuel, and I've written them down on a piece of paper. If food doesn't fit into my fuel and it isn't on that paper, I don't eat it unless it's an exception for a holiday or traveling or something like that.

On a regular day-to-day basis, I eat a very limited amount of food in terms of the types of food that I eat. I allow all vegetables, which is... that's a lot of vegetables, but basically the way that I use minimalism is I have a salad for lunch and a salad for dinner, and lots of vegetables, I have about six to eight ounces of that. All of a sudden I don't have a lot of decisions to make. It's very minimalist, I have a serving of protein and a serving of fat with each of those. It makes my life very clean, very easy, I don't have to spend a lot of time planning because I eat pretty much the same things everyday and I feel very fueled by that. I do not feel bored by that at all.

I don't drink alcohol at all anymore, so I'm a minimalist in the sense that I don't have a lot of wine and beers in my house. I don't have that because it's not something I drink. We do have wine for when people come over, and Chris drinks wine and beer so we have that, but it's not something that I have to consider what I'm going to have or what brand I'm going to do. That's the other thing that's interesting when it comes to food, is I like to not overwhelm myself with trying to decide which brand of salad dressing to get, or which brand of salad or type of salad, whatever. I keep it very minimalized in my life and very repetitive and that gives me a ton of freedom because it cleans out

anything excess in my life.

It's interesting, I used to cook a lot and I would buy all of the stuff for a recipe, and then it would just sit in the back of my cupboard and I never eat it again. One of the things that I like to do is make rules, like if I'm going to buy an ingredient, then I'm going to have to find seven other recipes to use that same ingredient so I can use that product. It's the same with clothes. If I'm going to buy something I need to have a couple of events where I can wear it where it would make sense. If I only buy it for one event and I'm only going to wear it for that one event, then I usually donate it after the event. I don't hold on to it for safekeeping. It's no longer useful in my life so I don't use it anymore.

The last way that I use minimalism is in my work. I've talked a lot about this when I talk about the concept of constraint. The concept of constraint is very applicable to minimalism because we have to minimize the amount of things that we're going to focus on in one day. Most of you know about me that I am not on social media in the sense that I don't have friends on Facebook. I'm not reading what everyone else is doing. I'm not posting pictures of my family and my friends. That's excess in terms of my life.

I feel like I can only allow five big things in my life to focus on and Facebook isn't one of them. In terms of my friends, I feel like I'm a minimalist when it comes to friends. I have like five best friends. I have a very limited amount of acquaintances that I spend a lot of time with, because I'm an introvert and so I find socializing and going out a lot very excessive for me. That's another way where I minimize where I'm going to focus and who I'm going to spend my time with, and that really works for me.

When it comes to work, there are so many options for me, I get so many requests for coaching, people wanting to be coached by me, people wanting to interview me, people wanting me to co-create projects for them, people wanting me to speak at their event or be on their calls for their summits and all of these things. I have to be a total minimalist when it comes to the opportunities that I'm going to participate in. Again, I have to love the opportunity, it has to be useful for me and it has to be something that I really value in order for me to

say yes, and that works really well for my work.

As I'm starting to now think about 2017 and what I'm going to do, I've completely minimized the number of coaches that I'm going to train and the type of work that I'm going to focus on. I feel like there's really clear lines around that and a lot of white space for me to think, and that's exactly how I want my life to be, not a lot of excess weighing me down. I've had this conversation with a lot of people about minimalism, and some people scrunch their nose up at me and say "oh my gosh, that's terrible. What's left to you Brooke? You're not drinking, you don't have sugar and flour, you know, you've cut all these...your house is like a museum. What else are you gonna cut out of your life?"

It makes me laugh because they feel like they think all of the fun is out of my life but it's the exact opposite. I feel like when all the excess stuff is out of your life, then you have so much more room for thinking about things and space for ideas and space for new things to come in to your life.

The piece that's the hardest for me to be a minimalist with when it comes to my work is my books. I am moving my office. I've had an office that was in a business building that I was going to and I'm moving it back to my house. I'm redoing the front of my house to make it into an office. As I was looking for furniture, I was going to buy two really large book cases. I noticed I was feeling really anxious about it, I was like "what is it about these book cases?" Not wanting them to be too wide, not wanting them to be too big.

What I realized is that I already have a little bookcase in my house and it's already overflowing with books. One of the things that was really amazing for me is when we went on our trip, I sold all of my books and I have hundreds and hundreds of books. I read two to three books a week, so I end up with a lot of books. One of the hardest things for me to do is to give my books away because I feel like I have a relationship with my books. I interact with them. I underline them, and highlight them and make notes in them, and I always feel like at some point I could go back and look at them again.

I often do when I'm creating programs, or doing podcast, or doing

research. If I really have good ideas that I get from books I want to share them with you all. Other times, I underline really cool passages and stuff like that that I never go and revisit again. One of the things that I've had to do recently is go through my books. What I've decided is I'm not going to buy a bookcase. I'm only going to use the bookcase that I have. If the book isn't able to fit in there, I can only have a limited amount so I have to prioritize and get rid of all the excess, and that's a really challenging thing to do.

As soon as I did it, I gave away six bags of books, I felt an immediate cathartic release, and that's how you know that you're on the right track. A lot of people are very attached to their belongings and they have a hard time giving them away. One of the things that I want to offer you if that is you, is that the meaning that you give to the thing doesn't require the thing in order to still have the meaning. If you have a dress that you wore to a wonderful event, you don't need to keep the dress in order to have the memory of the event. It may trigger thoughts about it but you can literally take a picture of it.

I remember watching Martha Stewart one time. What she does with her kid's artwork is takes a picture of it and then puts it in an album instead of keeping all the artwork which I thought was brilliant as a way of storing everything. Pictures is another area where you can get completely out of control with excess. If you have too many pictures then you can't even appreciate the quality ones. Being willing to go through and get rid of the excess and only keep the pictures ... It's really hard to delete pictures of your kids, and only keep the pictures that are really high quality that you love. That's a great place to get started and practice.

This concept is one that even if you're not that kind of person that would even consider, just pick one area in your life and play with it a little bit, and notice how you feel. Maybe it's just your bathroom, underneath the cabinet in your bathroom. Maybe it's just your closet. Maybe it's just your refrigerator or your freezer. What is in your freezer, do you even know? Are you one of those people? Do you even know what's in there and how long it's been in there?

Take your time and go through this and see how you feel, see how it feels to minimize the stuff that you have just in one area. I think you

will be delighted by how you feel. When you open your freezer and there are six things in there that are all edible, and they're all delicious, and they're all healthy, and they're all fuel and they are all things that you want to eat. It will be very different than looking in there and seeing five things that you don't even know what they are, and that's a metaphor for your entire life.

Living a conscious life means you really decide what you want your life to be. There's nothing in your life that you say to yourself "I don't know why that's there. I don't why I'm friends with that person. I don't know why I'm eating that. I don't know why I have that outfit. I don't know why that's in my refrigerator. I don't know why I'm doing this work on this one thing." Don't let your life to be like that. Know everything and do it on purpose, that is the gift of minimalism, and I really want to encourage you to try it out.

All right you guys, I have to say I think this podcast turned out way better than the last one. Second time, second time is always better. Even though the microphone isn't the same, I hope you guys get the same impact of what I am teaching. I will talk to you all next week. Take good care. Bye-bye.

Thank you for listening to The Life Coach School Podcast. It is my honor to show up here every week and connect with people that are like-minded, wanting to take their life to a deeper level with more awareness and more consciousness. If you are interested in taking this work to the next level, I highly encourage you to go to thelifecoachschool.com/howtofeelbetteronline. It is there that I have a class that will take all of this to a deeper application where you'll be able to really feel and experience how all of these concepts can start showing up in your life. It's one thing to learn it intellectually, it's another thing to truly apply it to your life. I will see you there. Thanks again for listening.