

Minimalist Health

How to Focus on the Essentials



By Tammy Strobel

Read the blog: RowdyKittens.com

Introduction

Taking care of your health doesn't have to be complicated. You can make the decision to intentionally structure your life so that both your physical and emotional health are in top-notch shape. This short manifesto will cover tips and tools to help you focus on the essentials.

Your life is your message, so take care of yourself. You only get one body and one mind. Cultivate both, be happy and do good.

The Story of Stuff

The [Story of Stuff](#) is about how we process, distribute and waste stuff. This process is causing an incredible number of health problems for people and Planet Earth.

For instance, [toxic chemicals are found in everything](#) and cause a wide range of illnesses. Illnesses like cancer and even imbalances in neurological and hormonal systems. These chemicals are so prevalent that they are even found in newborn babies.

The amount of unnecessary waste we generate is polluting the environment. Consumer culture has created a mentality of disposability. Consumer culture is causing major health problems for individuals and is killing the planet.

Annie Leonard recently came out with [The Story of Stuff book](#). Consider purchasing the book to learn more about this topic.

Micro-action

- Think about the stuff you buy and examine your consumption patterns.
- What steps can you take to [clear out your stuff](#)? Start with one pile at a time. Recycle, reuse and donate your excess stuff.
- Do you know what kinds of toxic chemicals are in your personal care products and food? Learn more at [The Good Guide](#).

Emotional Health

Excess stuff is not only hurting our physical environment, it is hurting our emotional health, too. Consumer culture has trapped us in a cycle of buy, work, spend, repeat. Many people are on an emotional treadmill and don't know why.

For example, writer [Ariel Gore](#) saw a therapist until she realized that what she really wanted was a clean home. She ended up hiring a housekeeper and is now happy.

The emotional and monetary cost of stuff is astounding. Instead of going shopping to acquire more, purge your excess stuff.



Micro-action

- How does all of your excess stuff affect your emotional well-being?
- Are you stressed out because of debt?

Kick Your Addictions

We all have addictions, including driving when we could easily walk or ride a bike, watching too much television or obsessively checking email and social networks.

Addictions can dominate and consume our lives. In addition, they prevent us from taking care of our health. For example, I'm a recovering car addict. Cars make it easy to travel long distances and in theory, get places quickly. But my car and lifestyle were killing me. I was overweight and depressed. Selling my cars was my catalyst for change. Thanks to selling my car, I'm healthy, happy and have learned to take care of my body.

Micro-action

- Sit down and make a list of your addictions.
- What can you change in your life today? Can you sell your television? Or go car-free?



Go Car-Free

The intended function of cars is comfort and convenience. However, owning two cars negatively impacted my health. By [going car-free](#), I've pedaled toward a healthy lifestyle.

Fear of questioning the status quo held us back from asking tough questions and selling our cars sooner. Asking questions about what is normal, necessary or what it means to live “the good life” can provoke a lot of anxiety and fear in all of us. Deciding to opt out of what is “normal” is one way to lead a healthier and happier life.

Sell your car and [pedal toward a healthier life](#). Join the car-free revolution.

Micro-action

- Make a list of your fears and ask yourself why you're feeling scared or hesitant about going car-free. What is the worst thing that could happen?



Destroy Your TV

Yes, you heard me. Destroy your television. On average, Americans watch [153 hours of TV](#) every month.

Studies have shown that TV is bad for your [physical and emotional health](#). Sitting on our butts for hours and hours everyday is just not good. Turn the TV off. Go outside and take a walk. Start practicing yoga. Be part of reality.

The more you limit your television consumption, the healthier and happier you'll be.

Micro-action

- Add up the number of hours you spend in front of the TV.
- How could you use those hours more effectively?



Do Something

Getting fit means you have to move your body. It's essential to pick an activity you enjoy. It could be running, walking or yoga, but you need to like it. If you don't like the activity, odds are you won't follow through.

Running, walking, riding a bike and yoga are all low cost activities. You probably already have a pair of walking/running shoes, a bike and maybe a yoga mat at home. If not, start checking out local shops for sales.

Taking care of your physical body doesn't have to cost a lot of money, but you have to do something. This can be hard in the modern world, especially if you have a desk job. I spend a majority of my time writing on a computer. Now that I work from home, I stand at my desk and do some kind of physical activity every day.

Go outside and get your move on. I know you can do it!



Find Balance Through Yoga

The [benefits](#) of [yoga](#) are incredible. If you aren't practicing yoga now, start. You will build strength and flexibility and learn how to relax in the midst of high-stress situations.

During practice, my mind is at ease. I don't think about web design, writing or photography. I am just there, in the moment, focusing on the current pose. My mind is quiet and in a world of constant noise and demands, I find this comforting.

Yoga has helped me cultivate mindfulness and brought a sense of peace to my life. It can do the same for you.

[Namaste.](#)

Micro-action

- You don't have to spend hundreds of dollars a year to practice yoga. You can practice in the comfort of your home. All you need is a yoga mat, a towel and comfortable clothes
- Go to the library and check out a few books on yoga.
- Research yoga poses online and subscribe to [free podcasts](#) on the topic.

Turn The Internet Off

Technology rocks and I'm a proponent of using tech for good. In fact, my career depends on technology. It is a beautiful tool, yet the way we use our mobile devices and computers can be out of balance with the rest of our lives.

Do we really need to surf, tweet and email from our phones or computers all the time? The Internet is a powerful, yet distracting tool. There is so much information flowing toward us; things to be read, new friendships to be made and more.

In an [age of distraction](#), it's hard to remember that physical and emotional balance are the keys to success.



Micro-action

Start limiting the amount of time you spend online and start focusing on your health. How can we help others if we don't take care of ourselves?

Rethink Work

Your day job doesn't have to be your only identity. Its easy to see why many Americans feel isolated from their communities when they typically spend 8 hours a day alone in a cubicle, then drive home (alone) to a big house and partake in our favorite analgesic: watching TV. I don't think any of these activities are inherently bad, but they don't promote a healthy lifestyle.

How can you become more active if you are still working 40-plus hours a week?

If you work in a cubicle forest, talk to your supervisor about working from home or reducing your work hours. A majority of office dwellers can complete their work remotely. People don't need to be tied to their cubicle to produce stellar work and many corporations recognize the importance of community service. The Internet has changed how organizations do business.

Working from home will give you more time to focus on your health. Instead of commuting to the office, you can go for a long morning walk, run or bike ride.

If that's not an option, you can still focus on your health at the office. Consider riding your bike to work, going on long walks at lunch or standing while you work.

Micro-action

- Talk to your boss about an alternative work schedule.
- Use your lunch hour to walk, run or stretch.
- Do something that will improve your physical and emotional health.

Stand While You Work

[“Your chair is the enemy.”](#)

Humans were not meant to sit all day in a chair. You might consider yourself healthy, however sitting all day puts you at [“increased risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, a variety of cancers and an early death.”](#)

If you're a sitting office gnome, start standing while you work. Why?

1. Standing while working is better for your health and heart.

You'll experience fewer back pains, burn more calories and improve your circulation.

2. Standing while working increases productivity.

I've been standing while working for the last few weeks and am much more productive. It's easier for me to

concentrate and I don't feel lethargic.

3. Improve your posture.

I have a bad habit of sitting hunched over at my desk. Standing while working has improved my posture. I stand up straight and my shoulders don't curl over.

Micro-action

- Take baby steps. Start standing a little bit every day and let your body get used to the new routine. You'll be up to 8 hours in no time.
- Talk to your co-workers and boss about your new idea!
- Restructure your workstation so you can stand more.

Simple Food Rules

Food is a complicated topic. Everyone has their own opinion about what types of food are good or bad. I'm a huge fan of Michael Pollan and have adopted a few of his simple [food rules](#).

1. Eat real food, including lots of vegetables and fruit.
2. Avoid food products that are processed and unpronounceable.
3. Avoid products that make health claims.
4. Shop the peripheries of the supermarket. The edges of the market stock real food. The deeper you go into the market the more processed junk food you'll find.
5. Get out of the supermarket and shop at the farmer's market.

Micro-action

- Stop eating fake food that comes in plastic containers.
- Find your local farmer's market.
- If you don't have a farmer's market, start a revolution. Get connected to your community and start asking questions.

Eat Real Food

Let's [teach every child and adult about real food](#). I believe the power of food can change our physical and mental health for the better.

Obesity, heart disease, and other preventable illnesses are killing Americans because we are not eating real food. A lot of these problems can be solved by eating simple and real food.

Cooking good, healthy food doesn't have to be difficult. You can create healthy meals that take 15-30 minutes to prepare, at home. Vegetables, salads, rice dishes, taco creations and homemade cookies are a few options to consider.

Micro-action

- Read: [In Defense of Food](#) and [Stone Soup](#).
- Create your own [food rules](#).
- Join the [food revolution](#).



Find Your Tribe

Simple living is about more than cute homes or counting up stuff. It's a movement connected to broader social problems, like the U.S. healthcare crisis, consumerism, cycles of debt and global warming. It's about re-examining our physical and emotional health and how our daily choices affect local and global communities.

Micro-action

- Connect with your [tribe](#). You can find your tribe through social networks or local community groups.
- Create your own tribe!



Do Good

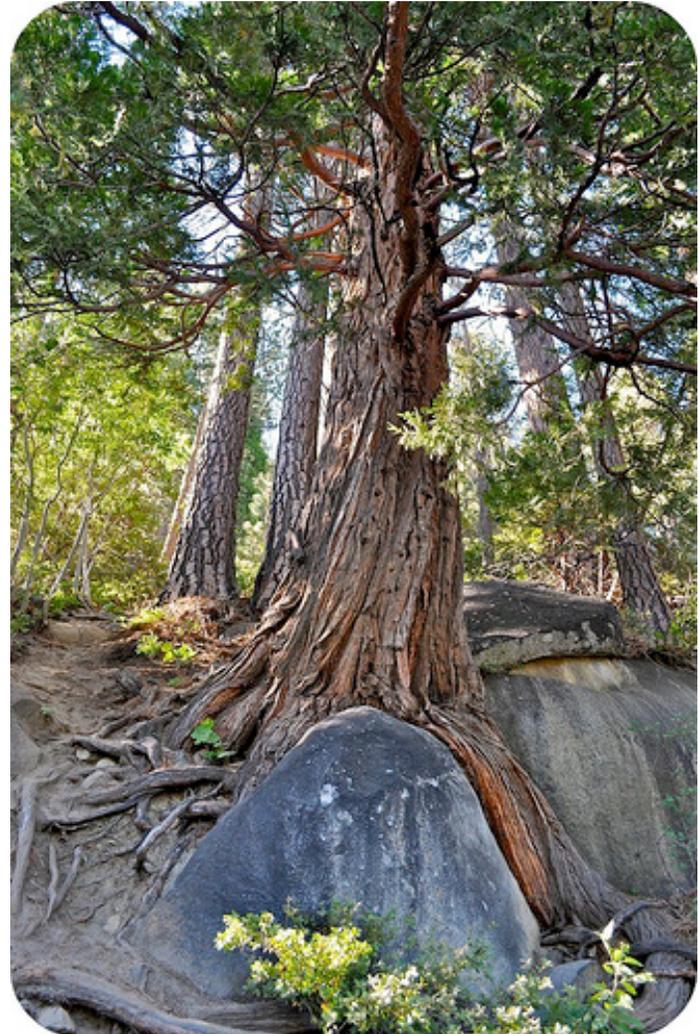
Design your life to make a difference.

Take care of your mental and physical health so that you can change the world. There are billions of people who need help. Some of those people don't have access to clean drinking water or healthcare or they face violence on a daily basis. Did you know...

- Over [1 billion](#) people in Africa and Asia do not have access to clean drinking water.
- [One in six American](#) women has been the victim of a rape.
- [According to UNICEF](#), 25,000 children die each day due to poverty.

Empower yourself so you can empower others.

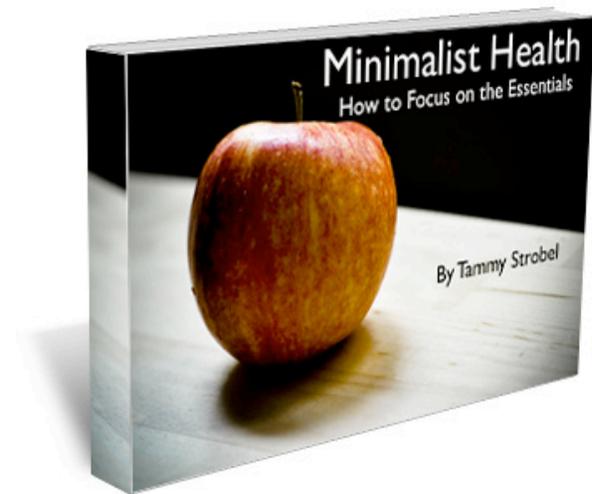
Get involved. Start a movement. Change the world.



Share this eBook

Encourage others to take care of their physical and mental health. You can do that by sharing the ideas in this manifesto. Here are a few options:

- Email it to friends, family and co-workers.
- Write about the manifesto on your blog.
- Share it with your tribe on Twitter or Facebook.
- Print out copies and leave them in the library or coffee shops.



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Read more: [Uncopyright and the minimalist mindset.](#)



About Tammy Strobel

I blog at RowdyKittens about social change through simple living. What's that all about? It's a social movement of people who are living simple, authentic and uncluttered lives. The purpose of RowdyKittens is to help individuals learn to live simpler, happier, calmer lives – kind of like kittens. Join the movement and change the world.

I'm the author of [Simply Car-free: How to Pedal Toward Financial Freedom and a Healthier Life.](#)

I'm car-free, own less than 100 things and live in Portland, Oregon, the best city on the planet.



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