



we live simply **manifesto**

*aka ideas for the rest of us

By Jonathan Blundell



*“live simply
so that others
may simply live”*

Mahatma Gandhi

introduction

When I launched WeLiveSimply.info in January of 2010, I was just starting to get serious about changing my daily consumption habits in an effort to better meet the needs of those around me.

The website was launched as part journal and part encouragement for others, to consume less and be a blessing to those around us.

I was definitely no expert in the field but I started soaking up information from all sorts of places and finding out what worked best for me.

I love how [Joshua Becker](#) describes his lifestyle: “a rational minimalist.” That’s probably a good description of where I am in my journey as well.

Though I’m often leary to consider myself a “minimalist,” (I tend to shun labels) I agree that we each have to find the systems, methods and ideals that work best for us and our situation.

Simplicity, minimalism, anti-consumerism and other “isms” are all a wash if you don’t figure out what works for you and apply it in your own life.

As I continued on my journey, I wrote my own [simplicity statement](#) in March of 2010:

I will live simply by investing in people and reducing my dependence on stuff so that I may truly love all that’s been given to me and create a better world for those around me.

This mission statement has only become clearer over the past year as I continue to learn – through my own reading, as well as from the great submissions and comments I’ve received from readers of the site.

Now, as I look towards 2011, I’m now the proud father of two boys which makes these ideals take even more priority in my life.

So I write this “manifesto” not as an expert but as an outgrowth of these ideals and as a marker in time, hoping to encourage others – including my boys – to live a more simple life, so that others may simply live.



Jonathan Blundell
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While Living Simply can mean a lot of things to a lot of people, as [Leo Babauta](#) writes, it really only comes down to two key principles.

1. Identify what's most important to YOU.

2. Eliminate everything else.

Putting them into practice however is a bit more of a challenge.

It's easy to have the head knowledge, but moving it from your head to your heart and making it part of your daily life can be difficult.

But luckily, this is more than just a lifestyle – it's a journey.

And I personally don't believe we ever "arrive."

Instead, we're always "becoming." We're always striving for better.

Before we begin, I offer one simple challenge.

Make a list of the four or five things that are most important to YOU.

Perhaps it's your spouse, your kids or your faith community. Perhaps it's your hobby, creating or your passion groove (more about that later).

Whatever it is, write them down. Put the list in a prominent spot (or several prominent spots).

As the Hebrew Scriptures suggest, “Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children. Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning to when you fall into bed at night. Tie them on your hands and foreheads as a reminder; inscribe them on the doorposts of your homes and on your city gates.”
(Deut. 6: 8-9)

Once you've figured out what's most important to you – the fun can begin!

And with that in mind, I offer my We Live Simply Manifesto – ideas for the rest of us.

Be present

Put aside distractions and be where you be.

Whether it's sitting in traffic, playing catch with your kids, enjoying a good book, enjoying coffee with your spouse or drinks with friends — enjoy the moments.

Life is too fleeting to spend our time caught up with every day distractions.

Don't be the dad who's too busy checking Twitter or Facebook on his cellphone to share a laugh with your children.

Don't be the mom who's too distracted with tomorrow's plans to enjoy a sit-down dinner with your family.

Put aside the distractions and be present.

Spend at least one day a month focusing on the under-resourced

Put aside your schedule, your worries and your pride and look for opportunities to focus on the under-resourced and the less fortunate.

I'm a big believer in the idea that we're blessed to bless. If we've been given much, we should give much in return.

Perhaps you'll volunteer at a soup kitchen. Perhaps you'll visit with residents at a local nursing home. Perhaps you'll read to kids in an after-school program. Perhaps you'll visit a local laundromat and pay for people's laundry.

Whatever it is – spend time caring for the under-resourced and less fortunate around you.

Be the blessing in their lives.

Go for walks with your family

My wife and I love taking walks together – at least two or three times a week.

They're usually simple walks around the neighborhood, lasting 30-45 minutes each and I believe the benefits are well worth the "sacrifice."

With our newborn twins, it's been just as much fun to load them into their stroller and take them along with us.

If necessary, purposely schedule your walks on your calendar to be sure you're doing it.

Create spaces of grace

Quit talking, updating your online status, writing blog posts and **listen** to those around you.

Listen to their stories. Listen to their joys. Listen to their doubts and their fears.

Listen to what makes them who they are and allow them to share without fear of criticism or judgment.

And remember that for most people, opening up and sharing their story is a hard thing to do.

Be gentle and compassionate with their hearts.

Seek compassionate connection

As Corey Allan writes in [Buck Naked Marriage](#), don't tie your conversations to a particular outcome.

No matter what the topic is, no matter what your opinion is, no matter how sure you are of yourself, never enter into any conversation with the goal of proving yourself right and the other person wrong.

Focus instead on making a real compassionate connection with others and then focus on being clear with your message and being sure you clearly understand their message.

Be intentional about meeting your neighbors

In our busy, hectic lives, we rarely know those living right next door.

Take time to be intentional about getting to know them.

Perhaps, bring them a box of chocolates at Valentines, or invite a different neighbor over each month for dinner, coffee or desserts.

Once you get to know several neighbors, organize a block party to celebrate random holidays or cultural events in each other's lives.

Collaborate with others

Find common ground rather than areas of disagreement and then work towards common solutions with others.

Find what makes others great and learn from them.

Find a common issue or problem in your community and then build a team around solving the problem.

Collaboration not only makes finding solutions easier, it also helps us make those compassionate connections with those around us.

Re-connect with old friends

Facebook might be a great place for making initial connections with old friends but it can be horrible for truly re-connecting with folks in the midst all the noise.

Take the initiative this year to re-connect with your friends offline.

Perhaps it'll be a phone call, a hand-written letter, or meeting for burgers and drinks at a local pub – whatever it may be, take your relationships offline and cultivate them.

Forgive generously

One of the easiest ways to lighten your emotional and spiritual loads is to forgive those who have hurt you and done you wrong.

Too often we're carrying around the hurt and pain others have caused us while they're off living life – totally unaware of what they've done to us.

Realize we're all human, we all make mistakes and make forgiveness a daily part of your life.

Spend at least one hour a day doing something you love

This might be your hobby, talking with your neighbor or simply finding a quiet spot to read and enjoy a hot cup of coffee.

Whatever it is – put all other things aside and focus on it for at least one hour a day.

Create

Set a goal to create something daily.

Perhaps it's one photo a day, one doodle a day, one ice carving a day or writing 500 words a day.

Whatever it is – set the goal and do it.

You may publish it, you may not, but regardless the practice will help refine your craft.

Grow something from seed

You may not have the time (or space) for a massive garden to feed your family from but take the time this year to plant something from its seed and cultivate it to its full maturity.

Tomatoes, peppers and herbs are all easy to grow in a flower pot and can usually be grown indoors or out.

There's great satisfaction and joy that comes from helping even the smallest plants take root and grow.

Cultivate your passion groove

Spend time this year delving into what makes you really sing.

If you already know what your passion groo-ve is – awesome! Cultivate it this year.

If you're still searching, spend time journaling and seeking it out.

As a quick guide – your passion groove is often that thing that makes you laugh, hurt or madder than hell.

It's often the thing in your life that keeps you up at night and continues to nag at you until the issue is settled.

[Find out more about your passion groove.](#)

Give thanks

As I write this, we've just finished a full Thanksgiving weekend here in the U.S. – the one point in our year when we purposely set aside time to give thanks for all we've been given.

Make a concerted effort this year to be more thankful.

Rather than spending one day out of the year giving thanks, find ways to give thanks the 364 other days of the year as well.

Be thankful for what you already have and take the time to be thankful to all those who make a positive impact in your life.

Observe a weekly Sabbath

Whether you choose the same day every week, or rotate your Sabbath each week, pick one day a week in which you will quiet your life and your soul and focus on rest and restoration.

Read more at sabbathmanifesto.org.

Take a week long digital sabbatical this year

Unplug from your phone, the Interwebs, your TV and any other digital media or connection.

Let those around you know you'll be disconnecting from the digital world and reconnecting with the physical and spiritual world.

Read more at rowdykittens.com/2010/07/digital-sabbatical.

Purge your stuff

Go through each room of your house once a month and purge the things you no longer need or use.

As a general rule of thumb, if you haven't used something in the last six months – you don't really need it.

Instead of hoarding it, donate to Goodwill, the Salvation Army or someone who you know will put it to good use.

For a more concerted effort, try a Fool Month of Purging (welivesimply.info/home/fooled-no-more-a-living-simply-challenge) – getting rid of at least one item a day for an entire month.

Make your bed

I used to HATE making my bed. Growing up I saw it as the ultimate waste of time.

Why spend time making my bed when I was only going to sleep in it again the very next night – especially when it meant I'd have to get out of bed 5 minutes earlier on school mornings to do so?

Now, I LOVE having my bed made (just don't tell my mom).

There's something calming about walking into a room that's clutter free – and that's especially true for a bedroom in which the bed is made.

Coming home from a long day at the office and seeing an unmade bed is just bothersome – but coming home and seeing a nicely made bed and knowing I'll be climbing into it in a few hours is uber-calming to me.

And while making my bed has a prosaic quality to it, it's a simple thing that can make a huge difference and it gives me a great sense of accomplishment at the start of my day.

A place for everything and everything in its place

Miss Minimalist, Francine Jay, drilled this motto into my head with her book “[The Joy of Less.](#)”

Now it’s next to impossible for me to walk through my house without seeing stuff out of place and thinking, “A place for everything and everything in its place.”

Simply put – everything in your home should have a specific place where it belongs.

It might be on a shelf, in a closet, or in a tub under a bed. Find a place for each and everything in your home and return each item to it’s place everytime you finish using it.

And if you can’t find a proper place for an item – perhaps it’s time to let it go.

One in, one out

This is another idea I give full credit to Miss Minimalist for.

Whenever you bring something new into your home, be sure you're sending something similar out the door.

If you're buying a new pair of pants, donate an older pair to charity.

If you're buying a new gadget for yourself, recycle an old gadget through services like Gazelle.com, there's no need to hold on to every Mp3 player you've ever owned.

If your child wants a new toy, you can agree to the purchase, as long as they agree to donate an older toy to someone who'll cherish it.

You remain the last defense to keeping the clutter out of your house and keeping this rule in place will give you a huge advantage over the collection of stuff.

Reset your house nightly

Spend 10-15 minutes each night before bed picking up those items that have strayed from their normal “home.”

Not only will it make the morning go smoother but it can help get you (and your kids) in a mindset of the day coming to a close as you prepare for bed.

Wash your dishes

Some people are so relieved to have an automatic dishwasher in their home – and I don't blame them. There are times I'm uber-thankful we have one as well.

But the problem with dishwashers is that they tend to drive me towards procrastination.

See if this reminds you of your own situation... You've finished dinner, you carry your dishes to the kitchen, only to discover the dishwasher is full of clean dishes.

So rather than empty the dishwasher, you simply pile your dishes in the sink, hoping they'll magically clean themselves. (I'm still waiting for that to happen.)

Instead, take a few minutes and clean each dish as you go. You'll be thankful in the long run and you'll burn 30 or so calories for every 15 minutes you wash dishes.

Read more at: becomingminimalist.com/2010/11/01/why-i-stopped-using-a-dishwasher

Clean your fridge out weekly

While leftovers are great, you may be surprised that they don't last as long as you may think.

Be sure you label and date your leftovers and toss out everything left in the fridge more than four or five days.

As an added tip, try and do this on the night before your trash is picked up to avoid any lingering smells from the things you might toss out.

Organize your pantry monthly

One of the biggest frustrations we often have with grocery shopping is going out and buying dry or canned goods for a recipe, only to discover we had the exact item already tucked away in our pantry somewhere.

Take some time to organize and sort your pantry on a monthly basis and you can avoid a lot of this frustration – and often find some menu ideas to boot.

Sort your mail as it comes in

Organize your mail as it comes in, rather than after stacks of it have piled up on the kitchen countertop. I like to “process” my mail right next to our recycling bin in the garage so none of the junk enters my house.

To cut down on the amount of mail, visit optoutprescreen.com to opt out of most pre-approved credit card offers, or visit obviously.com/junkmail for information on how to opt out of other mail like catalogs and supermarket fliers.

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I'd love to hear your thoughts about this book – positive or negative. Send me an e-mail to jdblundell@gmail.com or find me on Twitter [@welivesimply](https://twitter.com/welivesimply).

a special thanks

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