

# **THE POWER OF LESS**

## **BY LEO BABAUTA**

The Power of Less by Leo Babauta is a guide on how to de-clutter your life and work to create more time for the important things. Leo explains how identifying the essential aspects of your life and eliminating all of the non-essentials can allow you to focus on goals and aspirations that can continue to change your life for the better. We live in a world that is fast-paced and very-full, this book helps show you that slowing down and having less can actually be beneficial.

## **WHY LESS IS POWERFUL**

There is only so much we can do or consume. There are a finite number of hours in a day, and once we reach that limit to our production, we can't do more. The problem with trying to increase volume is that it doesn't always produce the best results.

Doing more things means you're likely to do a lot of unimportant things, and you'll be over worked and stressed at the same time.

### Principle 1: Set limitations

By setting limitations, we must choose the essential. So in everything you do, learn to set limitations

### Principle 2: Choose the essential

By choosing the essential, we create great impact with minimal resources. Always choose the essential to maximize your time and energy.

## **Choosing things with the most impact**

Make the choice to do fewer things, but with the most impact. What makes a task high-impact? Some examples are; getting you long term recognition, making you a lot of money in the long run, have the potential to greatly advance your career etc.

To determine which tasks have the most impact, first examine your task lists. Ask yourself whether a task will have an impact that will last beyond this week or this more impact.

An alternative way to determine which task has the most impact is by first assessing your goals and identifying what you want to accomplish in the next year. Plan your tasks so that each day, you are doing something to further these goals along.

Apply limitations to every aspect of life

First, ask yourself the following questions;

Which areas of your life are overwhelming? What would you like to simplify? Do you want to limit the number of possessions you have, what information you receive or what responsibilities you have? For example, if you have too many emails in your inbox, apply a limitation: only check your email twice a day and respond to 5 emails each time. This way you'll work more effectively and only deal to important emails.

## **THE ART OF SETTING LIMITS**

Many of us live our lives without limits, we have too much stuff to do, too much information, too much clutter, too many papers. Being limitless is weak. Learn to focus yourself with limits, and you'll increase your strength.

### **How limits can help**

Limits simplify things, life becomes more manageable and less stressful. It helps you focus your energy on a smaller number of things. Helps you to focus on what's important. Limits help you achieve more by focusing only on the essential. It shows others that your time is important. They will value your time more. Limits help you to be more effective. What to set limits on?

Everything in your life can have limits set to it, you don't need to revamp your entire life all at once. Start with one area at a time. Some ideas for a good place to start are; emails, the amount of time spent on the phone, projects, blogs you subscribe to, internet time or simply the amount of things on your desk.

### **How to set limits**

Analyze your current usage levels and pick a lower limit that you think is ideal Test it out for a week, analyse whether that's working for you If it doesn't work, adjust to a new level and test that out for a week Continue to adjust until you find the right level, make this a habit.

## **CHOOSING THE ESSENTIAL AND SIMPLIFYING**

Once you know what's essential, you can reduce your projects, your tasks, your stream of incoming information, your commitments, your clutter. You just have to eliminate everything that's not essential.

### **A series of questions – choosing the essential**

What are your values? Do you have goals? What do you love? Identify the things most important to you. What has the biggest impact? Where is the most long-term impact Needs vs. wants Eliminate the nonessential Continual editing Note: choosing the essential is almost never a one-time decision. It's something you have to re-visit regularly, as new things accumulate, as your values and goals change, as you learn that you can live with less and less.

Principle 3: Simplifying – eliminating the nonessential

Once you've identified the essential, the task of simplifying is theoretically easy – you just have to eliminate all the non-essential. In practice, this isn't always easy, although it does get less difficult the more you do it.

## **SIMPLE FOCUS**

Principle 4: Focus is your most important tool in becoming more effective.

Focus is the most important factor in determining whether you'll achieve a goal or stick to creating a new habit. Maintain your focus on goals and habits. Focusing on now, the present can also do a lot for you. It helps reduce stress and helps you enjoy your life to the fullest. Only focus on the task at hand, and focus on the positive. Be aware of negative thoughts and replace these with positive ones.

### **Single Tasking**

Multitasking is less efficient, due to the need to switch gears for each new task and then switch back again. It is more complicated and leaves you prone to stress and errors. Multitasking can be crazy-making, and in this already chaotic world, we need to rein in the terror and find a little oasis of sanity and calm.

Instead, single tasking is the way to go. First thing in the morning, work on your most important task, don't do anything else until this is done. Block off all distractions while you work on this task, shut off email, phones etc. Resist the urge to check emails, focus only on the task at hand. Once you've completed the task, process your notes and inbox, add new tasks to the to-dos and process any emails.

### **Focus on the present**

When you eat, just eat. Do one thing at a time. Be aware, especially of your thoughts Exercise, focus only on the exercise you are doing Have daily routines Put up reminders Remember, there is no failure. Celebrate every little success

## **CREATE NEW HABITS, AND THE POWER OF LESS CHALLENGE**

Principle 5 – Create new habits to make long-lasting improvements

The only way you'll form long lasting habits is by applying the power of less: focus on one habit, one month at a time. Select one habit, write down a plan, post your goal publicly and report on your progress daily. When complete, celebrate your new habit!

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Make sure you choose something measurable, so that you can assess how you're doing, be consistent and keep a positive attitude, remember setbacks happen!

### **START SMALL**

Principle 6: Start new habits in small increments to ensure success

Starting small will narrow your focus and keep your energy and enthusiasm going for longer. It will be easier to handle which will ensure your success.

Gradual changes are longer lasting, they are more likely to stick around. An example is, if looking to introduce waking earlier in the mornings, start by

An example is, if looking to introduce waking earlier in the mornings, start by waking fifteen minutes earlier instead of an hour.

## **SIMPLE GOALS AND PROJECTS**

It's easy to set goals, but extremely difficult to achieve them if they are goals worth achieving. The Power of Less is perfect for achieving goals: limit yourself to fewer goals and you'll achieve more.

### **The one goal system**

Choose one goal, focus all of your energy on this goal until you can check it off. Ensure that this goal is something you really want to accomplish, the stronger your desire, the more likely you are to achieve this goal. Choose a goal that will take between 6 months and a year to complete. Break your yearlong goal down into sub-goals. Make it a step by step process so you can focus on one at a time. These are more immediately achievable and can keep your motivation up. Break your

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## **SIMPLE TASKS**

### **MITS – Most Important Tasks**

These are the tasks you most want or need to get done today. Start with three per day and see if that works for you. Ensure that no matter what else you do or don't get done that day, that these three tasks (MITS) are complete. Ensure that one of the MITS should be related to your goals, the other two can be related to work stuff. The best way to attack MITS is to get them done first thing in the day, do not leave them till last.

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### **Small tasks**

Focusing on fewer but more critical tasks is important, but to really simplify our tasks, break them down into small tasks that can be completed in an hour or less.

## **SIMPLE TIME MANAGEMENT**

### **An open approach**

For those overwhelmed by a schedule, instead of allowing your life to be ruled by your calendar, let your life be ruled by the moment. Know your priorities and from moment to moment, decide what you should be doing based on your priorities, how much time you have available and your energy level.

### **Reduce your tasks**

The fewer tasks you have, the less you have to do to organize them.

Eliminate, delegate and postpone these. Focus on simplifying, reducing and eliminating.

### **Batch Processing**

Batch tasks together, for example, block out a period of time to make all of your phone calls, and set aside an hour a day for paperwork. Only check your emails first thing and last thing and block out time for errands that you need to run.

## **SIMPLE EMAIL**

Limit your inboxes – you might receive information through a variety of different sources, think multiple email addresses, texts, blog comments, messages online etc. Evaluate which sources give you value and eliminate others if possible. Limit your time per day – the best option is to check twice a day at 10am and 4pm, however, do whatever works for you. Just don't check all day, every day.

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When you do check your emails, process quickly. Work from the bottom to the top and deal with the immediately; delete, archive, reply, put on your to-do list or forward. Get it out of the inbox. Be liberal with the delete key, is it entirely necessary that you reply to every email? Keep going until your in-box is clear.

## **SIMPLE INTERNET**

### **Awareness: Track your usage**

Use a tool to track the time you spend online, this will make you aware of it, and sometimes it can be eye-opening. Take a look at what sites are time-wasters for you.

### **Consciousness: Make a plan**

Consciously plan your use of the internet. Set limits and have purpose for your time online.

### **Focus: Learning to work while disconnected**

Put distractions such as the internet in the background and allow yourself more time to focus on your task. Get your internet research done first. Then shut it off, set a time and work un-distracted for a set amount of time. Don't be tempted to 'jump online' quickly.



## **SIMPLE FILING**

So often people have desks stacked with papers, in other words, a disorganised mess. You want to aim to have a clean and clear desk. The first step is to create a simple system for organizing paper work, and then get into the habit of using your chosen system immediately and routinely. The simplest system is alphabetical, use manila folders with labels and create a file for each client/project.

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## **SIMPLE COMMITMENTS**

Reducing the commitments in your life could free up the time you need to focus on the important work and to achieve the things you want to achieve. You free up time to pursue things your passionate about. Take inventory of your commitments, whether it be work, side work, family, kids, civic, religious, hobbies, home or online. Make a short list of your 4-5 most important commitments. Begin to eliminate the non-essentials, if you're not getting any value from something cut it out. Start small but pursue this. Learn how to say no to new requests. Make time for what you love.

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## **SIMPLE DAILY ROUTINE**

Examine your daily routine, particularly the mornings and evenings.

### **The Power of a morning routine.**

With a well-planned morning routine you can prepare for your day and set goals. You can fit in some exercise, reading, writing or other things you don't have time for. You can do something enjoyable, calming and relaxing.

### **Supercharge tomorrow with an evening routine**

In the evenings you can use time to prepare for the next day, unwind and review your day. Calm yourself before bed or spend quality time with loved ones. You can log, journal, write or exercise. Pick activities that you enjoy and try your new routines out for a few days, adjust as needed. Maybe you start with a cup of coffee while you watch the sunrise, followed by a quick stroll around the neighbourhood and a short planning session. You can wind down your day by cooking dinner and eating with a loved one, reviewing your day, preparing for the day ahead and reading something enjoyable.

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## **DECLUTTER YOUR WORKSPACE**

Set aside time to declutter your desk, the benefits of a clear desk are;

It allows you to focus. It gives you a zen-like sense of calm. Follow up decluttering your desk with decluttering your home. Having a simple home is beneficial because:

Less stressful More appealing Easier to clean Set aside time every day to keep your workspace and living space clear. This will lead to a clearer mind and better ability to focus. Be ruthless, get rid of unnecessary stuff.

## **SLOW DOWN**

### **Slow Attention**

Unfortunately, with the hectic pace of our lives, our attention is pulled in a million different directions all the time. We switch our attention from one thing to the next and back again. As a result, nothing gets enough attention. Learn to focus your attention, slowly move your focus from one thing to another when the previous task is dealt with.

### **Slow Working**

Working at a slower pace can be more productive, as contradictory as that might sound. If you can focus on the important tasks and projects, and keep your focus on those tasks, you will accomplish important things.

### **Slow Eating**

Take smaller bites, chew slower and you will enjoy your meal for longer. This will allow you to enjoy your food, have better digestion and less stress.

## **SIMPLE HEALTH AND FITNESS**

Real health and fitness comes over a period of months and years. Lasting change is made gradually, in small increments, in a way that you can sustain for life.

Use the first month to focus exclusively on forming an exercise habit. Make it regular and important. Start small and focus on making it a habit. Schedule your workout time and don't allow yourself to miss a day. Don't give up and be accountable to others. Also, have fun! In month two, maintain your exercise habit while making gradual, healthy changes to your diet. Don't get starving, eat when you're lightly hungry. Eat light foods, nothing too heavy. Eat slowly and until you are full, not stuffed. Every month thereafter, set short-term goals for gradual improvements in your exercise and diet plans. Reward yourself each month and stay accountable. Gradually increase exercise and add variety. Continue to eat healthier by adding variety and new flavours.

## **ON MOTIVATION**

Motivation is what drives you towards a goal, what keeps you going when things get tough. The best kind of motivation, is for you to really want something, to get excited about it and be passionate.

- Start small, start with an easy goal and grow from there.
- One goal, one at a time, focus on it completely.
- Examine your motivation, know your reasons.
- Really, really want it. Commit publicly.
- Get excited.
- Build anticipation.
- Print it out, post it up.
- Just Start.