

Please note: This is a transcription so there may be slight grammatical errors.

Joshua Becker:

14 years ago, I was living in Vermont and we were doing our regular spring-cleaning, on a Saturday morning. I was cleaning out the garage. One thing led to another, and I spent hours working on the same garage while my son was playing alone in the backyard.

Happened to strike up a conversation with my neighbor who was doing all of her yard work and just began complaining about how much time and work had gone into taking care of all my stuff, and she's the one that introduced me to minimalism. She said, "You know, that's why my daughter is a minimalist. She keeps telling me, I don't need to own all this stuff."

Out of the corner of my eye. I could see my five-year-old son swinging alone on the swing set in the backyard and suddenly realized that all the things I owned weren't making me happy. But even worse, all the things I owned were actually taking me away from the very thing that did bring me happiness and meaning and purpose and fulfillment in life. And so that was the day where we decided to get rid of the things that we didn't need so we could focus more of our life on the things that actually matter.

Another pivotal moment was when I signed my first book deal. A couple publishers approached us about wanting us to write a book about minimalism. We pitched the book to 10 publishers. 9 of them responded that they wanted to publish the book, and I learned pretty early on that I was going to get paid a lot of money to write a book about how buying things won't make you happy. And I remember sitting down on the couch with my wife and I said, "What are we going to do? We legitimately believe everything we're writing here. We're not just going to go take the money and buy a big house and a big screen television and a nice car." Of course, we believed everything that we were going to write, and so we used the money and we started a nonprofit organization called The Hope Effect.

The goal of the Hope Effect is to change the way the world cares for orphans. We work in developing nations that need to have their laws changed or just need to have some resources and some training. We help them transition into a family-based care, more like what we have here in America, the foster care system, where we don't have large orphanages anymore, but we try to get kids where they can grow up in a family and get the attention and affection that they deserve.

I've really learned to value intentionality in my life, intentionality with my finances, intentionality with my time, energy, even the work that I do. Rather than defining success by the type of car that we drive, we can start defining success by how many people we picked up along the road.

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