



# THE ESSENTIALIST MANIFESTO

## How to do less, but better

- 1 Exercises the power of choice
- 2 Distinguishes the vital few from the trivial many
- 3 Instead of thinking “I can do both,” asks “What is the trade-off I want to make?”
- 4 Knows play is essential to spark creativity and innovation
- 5 Makes sleep a priority
- 6 Says yes to only the top 10% of opportunities
- 7 Makes 1 decision that eliminates 1,000 later decisions
- 8 Dares to say no firmly, resolutely, and gracefully
- 9 Subtracts more to bring forth more
- 10 Knows that if you have limits you will become limitless
- 11 Celebrates small acts of progress
- 12 Finds joy in the journey

FROM THE BOOK  
ESSENTIALISM: THE DISCIPLINED PURSUIT OF LESS BY GREG MCKEOWN  
APRIL 15, 2014



To start on the Path of the *Essentialist*, try the following exercises.  
Each can be done in under 10 minutes.

## Step 1: Explore

### •**Create a technology “Walden Zone”:**

Designate a room at home (or at work) technology-free. Banish all computers and put a basket by the door for phones and other devices.

•**Keep a Haiku Journal:** Keeping a journal doesn't have to take more than 5 minutes a day. Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry distinguished by its exceptionally short form. It contains only 17 syllables (5 in the first line, 7 in the second, and 5 in the last). So a haiku journal requires writing approximately the equivalent of one sentence a day.

•**Create a ritual of play:** When you first get to your desk in the morning, instead of checking email or Facebook, spend the first 10 minutes of your day drawing a picture (consider hanging your work proudly in your office to remind others to make time to play). Or put on a purely feel good song and listen to it while you start your day.

•**Get the noise out of your head before bed:** Instead of checking your email one last time before you go to sleep, write down (in a journal, not on your laptop) anything that is still on your mind so you aren't distracted by it as you try to fall asleep.

## Step 2: Eliminate

•**Apply the 90 Percent Rule:** Think of any simple request that has been made of you in the past week. Make a list of the “minimum” criteria for you to say yes. If it doesn't meet 90 percent of these criteria then it should be politely rejected.

•**Create a Tight Purpose; Loose Agenda:** Before going into your next meeting, pause and ask yourself, “What is the one thing I really want to achieve coming out of this meeting?” Don't walk into the meeting until you have your real purpose clear.

•**Set up an “Automated No”:** When we go on vacation it is the most normal thing to set an autoreply on our email. Why not use a similar bounceback when we need to concentrate? Set an autoreply that says “I am off the grid from 1-4PM today working on a priority project. If this is urgent call me on X.”

•**Conduct a Project Audit List:** Take a long hard look all the projects you are involved in, either at work or in your community. Ask “If I wasn't already involved how hard would I work to attend?” If the answer is “not hard at all” then ask to be released from your commitment.

•**Play Two for the Price of One:** Establish a new rule for 30 days: if you want to add a new activity you need to edit out two existing activities.

## Step 3: Execute

•**Set Internal Boundaries:** Anytime you feel internal pressure to do something to help save someone else time, or advance someone else's agenda, ask yourself if that person would make the same sacrifice for you. If the answer is no, you can eliminate without guilt.

•**Create buffers:** Write down the top five items you want to get done tomorrow. Then estimate for how long you think each will take. Add 50% to each and then budget your time accordingly

•**One Obstacle in One Minute:** Think of one essential thing you are procrastinating about or having trouble starting. Ask yourself what is the one obstacle getting in the way of getting this done? Now, think of the next action you can take to begin eliminating it.

•**Put in the video tape:** To create a new habit, as you're falling asleep tonight visualize yourself performing every step of that ritual or habit. For example, if your goal is to go running every morning, imagine yourself getting up, putting on your running clothes, tying your shoes, revving up your iPod, filling up your water bottle, stretching, etc. Then visualize yourself hitting the pavement. Finally, imagine how you will feel after running.

•**Tune into the present:** If you find your mind caught in endless loop of reliving past mistakes, or worrying about the future, simply stop. Pause. Focus on your breathing for 30 seconds and think about what is important right at that moment.