

ESSENTIALISM IN YOUR LIFE

WHO IS THIS COURSE DESIGNED FOR?

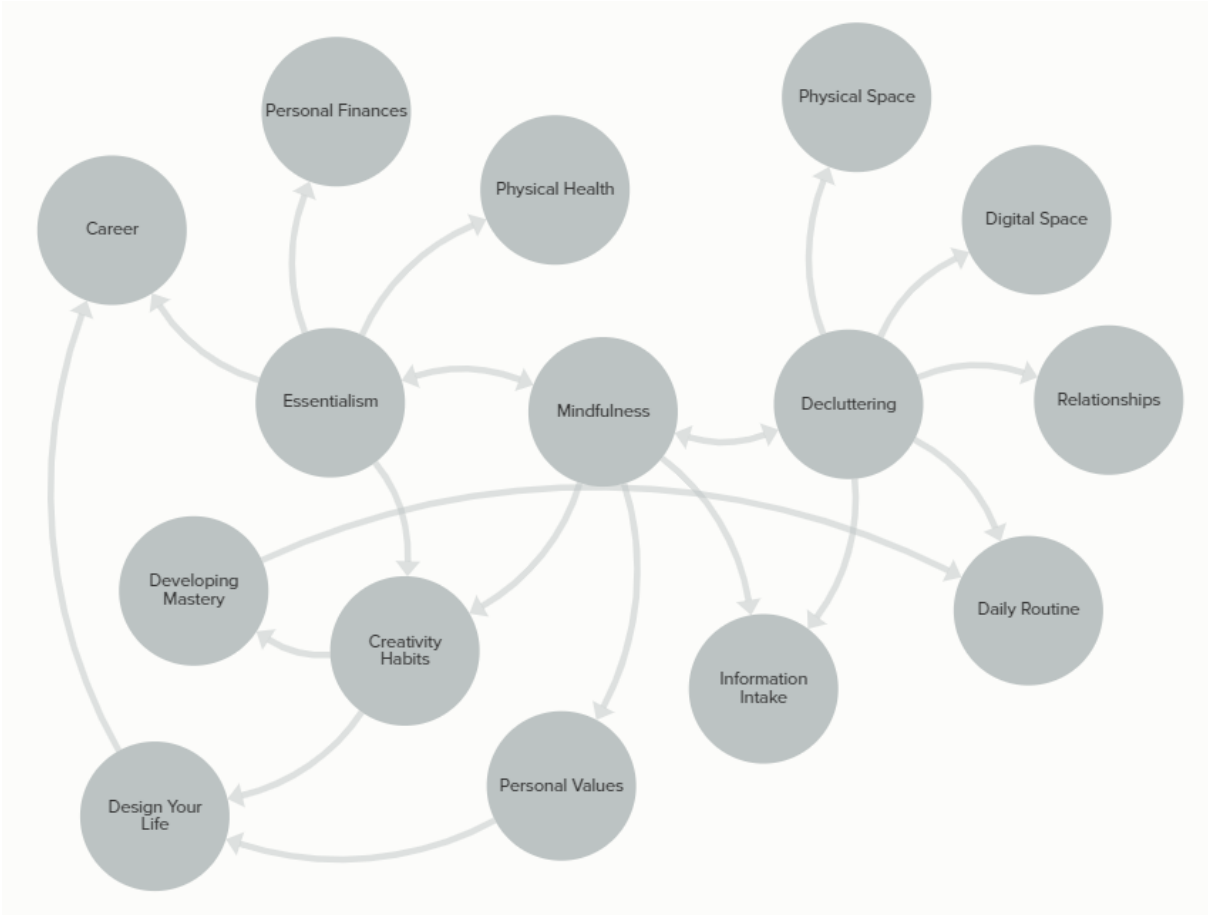
This course is for the person who has woken up and realized that the life they are living is someone else’s life; perhaps influenced by society at large or molded by those around them. But with a desire for a greater purpose and/or to escape the rat race they want to change but feel there are so many barriers in the way.

This course focuses on the root causes of our inability to change our lives and develop the personal capacity to overcome these things through building layer by layer levels of awareness and good habits while removing harmful habits. Like a circuit training course at the gym, this course covers a breadth of areas key to gaining control. And once in control, you can start to build a plan to make the transition to a life that is more true to yourself.

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

Courses in grey will be developed in the future.

This course is ordered in a specific way to be cumulative and not designed to skip around. Within each module are very short lectures each followed by a paired exercise that is designed to be repeated for a set number of times before moving to the next lecture/exercise pair. This is so there is enough repetition for habits to build before too many new ones are added. Try not to advance to the next modules unless mastering the previous ones.



Introduction (habits, decluttering, mindfulness, Essentialism, course overview) (5 lectures <20 minutes each)

Focusing your mind

- 100 Mindfulness techniques (training the mindfulness muscle) (13 lectures <15 minutes each)
- 200 Decluttering your living space & tidying (physical space mindfulness) (15 lectures <15 minutes each)
- 300 Decluttering your digital space & information intake (mental space mindfulness)
- 400 Examining your daily routine & managing it (temporal mindfulness)

Focusing your surroundings

- 100 Physical health (optimize the body to support you)
- 200 Personal finances (optimize money to not get in the way)
- 300 You, Inc. (optimize career and personal marketability)
- 400 Relationships (optimize commitments to others)

Focusing your intentions

- 100 Discovering your values & strengths (design your life phase 1)
- 200 Imagining a future you (design your life phase 2)
- 300 Forming creativity habits (overcoming resistance)
- 400 Mastering your craft (becoming a professional)

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

INTRODUCTION

Economists label you as a Consumer in the global economy, and by that definition, it's your job is to make choices on what you consume to live a fulling life. But do you know how you make those choices? Without an explicit strategy, you become another cog in the economic machine swayed by others who use you to earn themselves money or gain power.

How do you get from being pushed by momentum and others to actively making choices that benefit you? Start by clearing your life's overfull plate and begin to refill it with only what really matters to your true self. This course starts with the building block theories behind this process and introduces what techniques will be used to put yourself into the driver's seat again in your life.

This course starts with explaining how the habits that make up your life are key to changing course. Then, decluttering is introduced as a way to create space to change those habits. Mindfulness is then introduced as a way to exercise the awareness muscle that is critical in boosting habit change success rates. Finally, the framework of Essentialism is covered as the filter which if we view our lives through, we can make the choices that lead us to what really matters.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

COURSE CONTENT

This course will cover four basic concepts that are the foundation of the rest of the courses:

HABITS: YOURSELF ON AUTOPILOT

Most of us would like to believe that we are fully in control of our choices in life. However, according to two separate studies researchers found that up to 50% of our activities are driven by our habits (Dean, 2013). This reality is something we brush aside; have you ever trained yourself on how to build and break habits as you would learning to drive a car (itself made up of many habits)?

This lesson will cover the fundamentals of habits: what defines them so you can spot them in your life, how they develop them over time unknowingly and likewise break suddenly with changes in context, and how you can actively curate the habits you perform both adding good ones and substituting bad ones.

Understanding how habits work and develop is key to understanding why the overall course is structured so differently than normal school courses. The ratio of lectures to exercises, the cumulative ordering of concepts, and the number & length of repetitions for exercises are designed to help good habits integrate firmly in your life rather than a typical school course whose goal is to communicate knowledge.

DECLUTTERING: CLEARING THE PLATE

Clutter in the dictionary is both a noun and a verb, both definitions relevant to many of our lives (Merriam-Webster, 2019):

- **Noun:** a crowded or confused mass or collection
- **Verb:** to run in disorder, to fill or cover with scattered or disordered things that impede movement or reduce effectiveness

We can see clutter in our lives not just as objects (noun) but also as how we run our lives from our daily schedules, relationships, careers, and of course our living spaces (verb). Some of us may feel that this is an inescapable reality of modern life. Decluttering then is the act of trying to remove the clutter, and in the recent press has seen a rise in people seeking ways to do it with searches on Google tripling in the past five years (Google, 2019).

This lesson will cover the common things and ways people declutter, some of the benefits of decluttering related to cognitive load, time, money, etc., and how practicing decluttering has similar effects to other good habits such as meditation and focus.

Decluttering is directly covered in two courses (**Focusing Your Mind 200/300**) and is part of another course (**Focusing Your Mind 400**).

MINDFULNESS: KNOWING WHERE YOU ARE

Practiced for centuries, mindfulness is a tool that humans have been using in many ways and is ingrained in our traditions and religions. In our modern world filled with distractions and overloaded stimulation, mindfulness is an even more critical skill to have.

Mindfulness is defined as “the practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis” (Merriam-Webster, 2019). When in this state of heightened awareness, we can catch ourselves right at the moment when we are about to execute on a bad habit and decide to switch it with a better choice. We can better sense our own intuition about a situation, handle strong emotions consciously instead of letting them overwhelm us, and even hear the inner voice that tells us what's right for us to be doing in the future.

This lesson will cover what mindfulness is and its effects on the brain. Then, it will explain how mindfulness helps with consciously shaping our habits and how it is useful as we look to find purpose in our lives.

Mindfulness is covered in **Focusing Your Mind 100** and is underlying the entire **Focusing Your Mind** section.

ESSENTIALISM: DECIDING WHAT MATTERS AND WHAT TO KEEP

Introduced in Greg McKeown's book *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*, this framework asks us to choose less but better as the mantra for everything we do in our lives. Instead of believing that 'we can have it all' and 'I need to do everything', we switch to a more realistic and liberating view of 'doing the right thing in the right way at the right time'. (McKeown, 2014)

This framework is especially important in our modern-day world of abundant choices of what we buy, spend our time pursuing, and use our limited cognitive reserves. Without a clear objective to filter these choices by, we repeat our lives like its [Groundhog Day](#) and feel stretched thin and overworked without the fulfillment we seek.

This lesson will cover the basics of essentialism and two core concepts that will be used in the course: selecting only clear yes's and saying no to everything else and clarifying your essential purpose and intent. These will be the overarching principles used in the **Focusing Your Surroundings** and **Focusing Your Intentions** modules.

SUMMARY OF THE REMAINING COURSES

Finally, the last lesson is an overview of the remaining courses:

1. **Focusing Your Mind:** the brain is a supercomputer that is instead used like a sponge
2. **Focusing Your Surroundings:** your environment affects your chances of success
3. **Focusing Your Intentions:** creating a plan and executing on your being your best self

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

You will understand the basics of habits, decluttering, mindfulness, and Essentialism, more specifically:

- What habits are and how they are integral to our daily lives
- How habits are developed consciously or unconsciously
- How habits can be retrained and why sometimes they revert
- What is decluttering and its common forms
- Cognitive load and how decluttering effects it
- Decluttering as practice for prioritizing
- What is mindfulness and its effects on the brain
- How mindfulness helps with habit formation & decluttering
- Mindfulness and finding your purpose
- What is essentialism and the mantra "less but better"
- Selecting only your clear yes's; everything else is a no
- Clarifying your essential intent/purpose

CHARACTERISTICS OF CLASS MEETINGS

You will leverage video/audio recordings to learn concepts. No outside help is required.

COURSE TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Each lesson is designed with a knowledge check quiz at the end to help summarize the content.

Lesson	Lecture (~20 minutes each)	Assignment
1	Habits: Yourself on Autopilot	Knowledge Check
2	Decluttering: clearing the plate	Knowledge Check
3	Mindfulness: knowing where you are	Knowledge Check
4	Essentialism: deciding what matters and what to keep	Knowledge Check
5	Overview of the remaining courses	n/a

ADDITIONAL READINGS

LESSON 1: HABITS

Making Habits, Breaking Habits discusses foundational concepts about habits and serves as the basis for some of the techniques used in this course (Dean, 2013).

LESSON 2: DECLUTTERING

The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up covers the envisioning and techniques needed for decluttering your home's physical objects as well as tidying techniques for afterward (Kondo, 2014).

LESSON 3: MINDFULNESS

Search Inside Yourself introduces the benefits of meditation both internally and externally at work and in relationships (Tan, 2012).

LESSON 4: ESSENTIALISM

Essentialism is an overarching framework to how to think about decisions in your life of focusing on only what is important and removing the clutter (Mckeown, 2014).

MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES (FOCUSING YOUR MIND, 100 LEVEL)

INTRODUCTION

Most people know that exercise is key to being physically in shape. But how many people properly think about exercising their minds to stay mentally in shape? Meditation is a millennia's old way of exercising the mind to build resilience to intense negative emotions, increase the amount of willpower to do the tough but important things in one's day, and in more recent studies even ward off dementia in old age (Elias, 2013).

Just like an exercise routine at the gym that consists of different weight, reps, and intensities, building a portfolio of meditation techniques of different lengths, styles, and for different situations can help you have a well-rounded state of mind ready for life's ups and downs.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

COURSE CONTENT

This course will teach you how to develop a regular meditation habit without any prior knowledge and with bite-sized lessons and exercises that require the minimal amount of willpower to accomplish.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

You will be able to do the following exercises, ideally from memory and with minimal effort by the end of this course. Each lesson is designed to be cumulative so cannot be completed out of order.

- Understand the benefits of having a meditation practice
- Form and recall an intention around their meditation practice
- Sit in a proper and comfortable position
- Perform a sitting meditation for up to 20 minutes
- Perform a walking meditation
- Have a mindful conversation with a friend
- Perform a body scan meditation
- Have and write in a journal
- Perform a self-assessment in a journal
- Perform a settling attention meditation

CHARACTERISTICS OF CLASS MEETINGS

You will leverage video/audio recordings to learn concepts. Some lessons will require another person to finish (specifically the mindful conversation lesson).

COURSE TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

For each lesson, you are expected to first watch/listen to the lecture. Then, you will practice the action for at least seven times (a week).

Lesson	Lectures (<20 mins each)	Action/Habit (performed 7 times unless specified)
1	Meditation brief overview & benefits	Two minutes sitting still
2	Intention forming	Form an intention, recall before each 2 minute sitting still
3	Following the breath	Two minute follow the breath meditation
4	Posture & distractions	Add posture awareness & distraction handling to practice
5	Extending the time	Increase total time to 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes
6	Walking meditation	Add a 5 minute walking meditation, total time 20 minutes
	Mid-Point Expectation	Have a 20 minute a day meditation habit
7	Mindful conversation	Weekly 15 minute conversation with friend just the looping portion
8	Dipping in conversation	Add a dipping portion to conversation

9	Circuit training	16 minute meditation
10	Body scan	15 minute meditation
11	Journaling	3 minute daily habit added to end of meditation
12	Journaling for self assessment	One-time exercise of broad self-assessment
13	Settling attention (SBNRR)	6 minute meditation but need to assign a cue list (like when angry, sad, etc.)
	Completion Criteria	Have a 20 minute a day + journaling habit Tried weekly conversation 4 times (~1 month) Tried SBNRR one time for each cue

ADDITIONAL READINGS & RESOURCES

Search Inside Yourself provides the basis for the exercises in this course and goes more in depth into each one. There are additional exercises not covered in this course as well. (Tan, 2012)

Stop, Breathe & Think is an application for your smartphone that has guided meditation exercises as well as a pleasing timer mode which can be used in the above exercises. (Stop, Breathe & Think | Guided Meditations & Mindfulness, n.d.)

Timeglass is an application for your smartphone that lets you set custom timers in a row which is specifically helpful for the circuit training exercise. (Timeglass Timer - Countdown & Interval Timers, n.d.)

DECLUTTERING YOUR LIVING SPACE (FOCUSING YOUR MIND, 200 LEVEL)

INTRODUCTION

As 2014’s bestselling book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* and subsequent TV show boldly proclaims, decluttering will change your life to which many critics took as an exaggeration. However, examining the actual techniques used in Marie Kondo’s process, similarities between it and mindfulness techniques are abundant. Examples including a strong emphasis on awareness, listening, rituals, and envisioning. It’s no surprise given many of the techniques in Marie Kondo’s process mimic that of Japanese Shintoism (Doyle, 2019).

In addition to mindfulness, decluttering ties into principle of Essentialism: saying no to non-essential things, getting rid of distractions that tax your willpower and your money, and even gives the opportunity to discover what is most important to you. As practice for larger challenges in life, decluttering is a tangible introduction to what is down the road.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

COURSE CONTENT

This course will teach you how to declutter your living space without any prior knowledge and with bite-sized lessons. Unlike the previous course, some exercises will involve blocks of time to complete.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

You will be able to clean your living space following a plan (no need to memorize) and keep it tidy with simple to remember techniques. You will also have complete one round of decluttering of your living space.

- Understand the benefits of decluttering your living space
- Declutter your clothes
- Declutter your books & papers
- Declutter general household items
- Declutter items with sentimental value
- How to keep your clothes organized
- How to keep your books & papers organized
- How to keep spaces in your house organized
- Getting rid of something properly
- Adding something to your home intentionally

CHARACTERISTICS OF CLASS MEETINGS

You will leverage video/audio recordings to learn concepts. Some lessons may need to involvement of other people in your household.

COURSE TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

For each lesson, you are expected to first watch/listen to the lecture. Then, you will either finish the homework completely until moving on to the next lesson.

Lesson	Lectures (<20 mins each)	Exercise
1	Decluttering brief overview & benefits	n/a
2	Clothing overview, basic clothes	Clear out basic clothes
3	Specialty clothes	Clear out specialty clothes
4	Books	Clear out books
5	Papers	Clear out papers
6	General excl. Kitchen	Clear out the general excl. kitchen
7	Kitchen	Clear out kitchen
8	Sentimental items	Clear out sentimental items
	Completion Criteria	At least done a pass of each of these categories
9	Tidying overview	n/a
10	Clothes	Arranged your clothes and practiced folding twice
11	Books & Papers	Arranged your books/papers and practiced paper filing twice
12	General	Arranged things outside your kitchen
13	Kitchen	Arranged things in your kitchen and practiced cleaning
14	Disposing of your stuff	Get rid of most of the things you selected in beginner

15	Buying things intentionally	Create a shopping list and determine need vs. want
	Completion Criteria	Maintained a clean house and gotten rid of old items

ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES

The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up is the basis of this course (Kondo, 2014).

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