

Hello, hello, is this thing on. Hi, hi, it's so nice to be in your ears and be having another conversation with myself. These are fun. I'm laughing but these actually have been really fun so far, doing the introduction, doing the first episode. This second one is coming, again, gosh, you must be so sick of me, slightly late, but I won't even actually give major excuses except to say that if I'm honest, I have been so overwhelmed in the best way possible by the feedback that came through from the last one. So at the end of the last recording, I did of this, and also in the email that went with it, I said if you have any questions or anything you'd like me to talk about in future ones, future episodes, it feels weird calling these episodes because it's really not a podcast or anything but in future recordings, that I'd be happy to try and do that.

I don't know, I was so happily surprised by the responses, but I was a little bit overwhelmed by all of the emails that came through. And it took time to sift through them and to kind of figure out if there was major themes or categories or something that I can put them into so that I could make these a little less random and a little more focused. And I think I have done that now, and I'm actually really excited for this next one.

So rather than telling you coming up, I actually just want to say this one feels so important, this category or theme or whatever we're going to call it, feels so important. Because I feel like I'm actually going to get an opportunity to share a bunch of things, sort of of how my mindset has shift, things I've learned since writing *The Year of Less* and also stuff that I don't really know that I'll talk about again, if that makes sense. Just in that I don't talk about this stuff that much anymore in general, which I guess was a big thing or a big kind of theme that came up after *The Year of Less* came out. And I just went through this period of feeling very much like I was done with that topic. But I do still have thoughts, our thoughts are, or should be always kind of growing and evolving. And so, I do still have some thoughts on these topics and I'm excited to dive into them. So I'm just going to do it.

And we're going to call this little episode *Every Last Thing I Have to Say About Minimalism Today*, August, what is it? 8th that I am recording this. It is August 8th. And then I'll have to submit this recording to a website to get the transcript and then I'll send it over. So every last thing I have to say about minimalism today. So for some of these, I'm going to read questions or kind of read a bit about what you shared and some are a little longer than others. I'm actually going to start with the long ones, I think. And I'll keep it anonymous just for fun, but if you're listening, you will know which ones were yours.

So here we go. The first one I'm going to read here. So the writer says I have been struggling to find the sort of 'best place' to donate a lot of my stuff that I just don't need anymore. I live in the US and have used Goodwill and GreenDrop, but have found some ethical conflicts with both options. Do you have any recommendations for better places to donate items other than these/thrift stores?

So first of all, maybe because I'm Canadian, I've never heard of GreenDrop, it sounds really interesting. I should have Googled it before I started hitting record or before I hit record and started talking, but it sounds intriguing. I will say that my quick answer to this is that I don't have a great answer to this. I can share some of the things that I do now, today. So just thinking of a few things I... what do I even buy or what have I gotten rid of? So clothes, I don't know the last time I did anything with clothes, meaning donated, threw out anything. I have had the same clothes for, in one way, I'll actually say a little bit too long. And what I can just reflect on in that is that something I've actually been feeling for a long time was that I'd feel like I've... I'm just going to pause here and say, if you've read *The Year of Less*, I have never really identified as being someone who wanted to express myself through fashion.

Now, I'm in an interesting place where I'm noticing that some of the clothes I'm wearing don't feel like me anymore. And before the pandemic, I thought that 2020 might be the year where I bought some

new clothes, where I tried to figure out what my, I don't know, 35-year-old style is. And then because of the pandemic, I basically live in my pajamas half the time and I have like this full-on... my family and I joke, it's like my pandemic outfit. I pretty much live in my sweat pants/pajama pants and some kind of tee shirt or tank top and then a sweater. So that is what I live in during this.

But just to say, it's been a really long time since I've bought clothes and it's also been a long time then since I've gotten rid of anything. If I did today, I would say that if the clothing item was still usable, wearable, meaning it wasn't ripped up, stained, things like that. I would still take it to a thrift store. The reason I would is because I know it would be something, I would look at it and say, yes, this is something that someone would buy, so I would still take that to a thrift store. If it is ripped, if it is stained, nobody wants that. If you take it to a thrift store, especially certain ones that donate it to certain places, it will likely just end up being bagged up and potentially even being shipped off to a developing country, places where they just sort of... it's a similar way that we, or at least in North America we ship away half of our recycling, although there's lots of countries that don't take it anymore, but we sort of just think we can ship away our problems.

So ultimately, end of day is like, when the item is no longer good enough, I would just put it in the trash. That's where I'm at right now. Maybe someone has a better answer for me, but I think like if it gets to a place where it's really not fixable anymore, and if you wouldn't wear it, and you wouldn't want someone else to wear it, to me, then it's trash. So that's a thought, clothes.

Things like books, I don't donate to thrift stores unless I'm in a small town. When I was living in Squamish, I would've taken books to a thrift store because I know that they would have been purchased. But yeah, now I do more things like I will either take them to libraries. Typically, libraries will take some amount of book donations and what they end up getting piled into usually is sort of a... A lot of libraries will do book sales maybe once or twice a year and some of those donations that they get end up just being sold. So maybe the books that you donate, the library will sell for like a dollar and then they take the proceeds, which feels good to me.

How do I explain this? I also leave a lot of books in public, sort of the best way I can describe this. I do this all the time when I'm traveling. I definitely believe, especially just for where I'm at right now, financially, and especially as an author, it feels incredibly important to support other authors. So when I'm traveling, I try not to bring books with me and instead buy books when I want to read them. And when I'm done reading them, I will often leave them in a coffee shop or in a public space where I know that it won't get rained on. I'm saying this very specifically, because I seem to enjoy traveling in the fall or winter or that I just like cold climates in general. So I will leave them in places that they will not get wet.

This is obviously a little bit different right now because of the situation that we're in, but that has been a practice of mine and I see it continuing to be one in the future. And I also leave them in Little Free Libraries, that's something I do more at home because Little Free Libraries, they're not something I've seen in that many places around the world, other than North America, so. I did find a few in the UK but they're kind of few and far between, but that's what I do here. And honestly, it could be a lot of them, I can build up a whole stack of books and walk them up to a Little Free Libraries that's maybe 20 minutes from my dad's house and I'll put them all in there. So things like that, you can also do secondhand bookshops where sometimes they'll do like a buyback program. They'll give you a little bit of money for bringing books in that they can sell. And then that gives you money that you can go and spend in their store.

The rest of my thoughts on this, they can be really location-specific, there are a couple ideas, I guess, that I can give you. So one is that there are places, specifically, I know of one called ReStore, which is, I

think, under the brand Habitat for Humanity, I think that's correct, but ReStore can be a great place if you've done a rental, something on your home, they also sometimes take small household items, just things maybe like lamps, they do more like lighting fixtures, but they could take things like lamps, tables, shelves. So ReStore or places like that, or you can look for places like that can be a good option.

I also know that there can be really unique programs depending on where you're living. So one that I remember people had told me about in, can't remember if it actually in Squamish or just if someone in Squamish told me and it was maybe located in Vancouver, but there was a program where people would take things like sheets and towels and they would turn them into rags. And rags probably I'm guessing specifically for things that you would maybe take them to a mechanic. I'm saying that because in my dad's household, because my dad is an engineer and does a lot of... well, he does all of our car work on all of our cars if needed. But to him, truly a statement he will make is that there is no such thing as too many rags in a mechanics workshop. And so, it means, in the end, they will not be, or they will need to get thrown out, but at least they get to continue to live for a little bit longer or not be immediately thrown in the trash.

So anyways, there are all kinds of unique little options. I do know, because I have felt this myself, that it can be incredibly overwhelming to think about having to do the research, to figure out where some of those things go. but if you are in that position, it could be worth trying and just Googling things like ways to recycle X, whatever the object is, and then maybe say in state, or province or in the closest big city to you, and just kind of Googling around and seeing what you can find. You might be able to find things listed in forums. I don't use forums myself, but places like Reddit. I know that, I think anyways, the minimalists have Facebook groups for... not that they set them up, but that I think other people set them up in different cities around the world, maybe you can find people talking about this in some of those if you use Facebook.

Isn't that awful though that I don't have like some great answer. I don't have one option that would be the most helpful or that we could kind of put it all into. And that is why taking it to things like thrift stores or Goodwill, or here in Canada, you might get it picked up from your house from Canadian Diabetes or Big Brother or Big Sisters, and yeah. I will say this is why it feels so important to, honestly, just dig into the root of why we consume so much in the first place. And that is so that we don't find ourselves doing this every five, 10 years where we're buying too much, then decluttering a bunch of stuff and donating again, and again and again. If that is the cycle that we stay on then this is the position we will find ourselves in over, and over and over.

So I do think it's important for us to address the issue, that's actually a question that comes up a little later. So yeah, it's just really important to get to a place where we don't buy more than we need. Also, so we aren't using more resources than we need, and then aren't throwing them away, especially if they've been unused.

I did have a thought actually to add on to that question is that I do have two, I guess, shopping tips or tricks that I use nowadays and that just helps me not buy too much stuff. The first is that I ask myself when I'm going to use the thing I'm thinking about buying. I was thinking about this, how do I explain this in terms of how do I know when I'm going to use it or what is the sort of threshold for that decision? Actually I can give you a very specific example, I typically try not to buy a book unless I'm going to start reading it that day, maybe the next day, but I try not to buy it unless I know that that is the book I want to read right now. This is obviously a lot easier to do when I'm traveling and I don't want to be carrying around 10 or 12 books with me. But I have been trying to do it more this year as well, or continue doing it this year as well.

So yeah, books, that's like a very specific one, it has to be like that day kind of feeling. So clothes, I guess I've already shared this, I don't really buy clothes ever. I do think because of the fact that I never buy them, it would probably be similar. I would buy it knowing that, A, that it fits well. I absolutely know I will not make the mistakes of my past, where all I did was buy things that didn't fit me properly or kind of fit okay. I will not repeat those mistakes. So yeah, I probably won't buy anything unless it fits me well, and I know that I'm going to wear it within the next few days. The second tip or trick is more one that I use to kind of make sure that I feel good about making the purchase, that I feel okay about it and also, that it makes me feel grateful for it.

So essentially what I do is before I buy something, I will look at it and consider the resources that went into making it. The way that I do this is so sort of elementary in the grand scheme of things. I do not know the exact processes that go into making every single thing that I buy, but just an example, buying a book, I can look at it and recognize both that the pages that the cover were made out of trees, just say that I'm like, I'm sure there's a lot of water in that process as well, but we can just start with that. And also, that the ink, depending on where it came from, I mean it's likely made from oil. Actually, I do know with my first or with my new book, with Adventures I have to go through actually and see the whole email, but Little Brown had sent out this really interesting email at the start of this year about a bunch of processes that they had been changing over the past few years to reduce their environmental impact in production, so I'll have to go through and reread that.

But anyways, that's just books, for clothes, it really depends on the product, but things like polyester comes from oil, a fun fact, I didn't actually know that until, I don't know, a year or so ago, or it just had not registered for me. Cotton, I don't know the exact statistic, but the number of liters it takes to produce say like a cotton tee shirt is extraordinary. Did I say that right, liters of water? I'm having a moment where I'm like did I just say liters? Liters of X. But it takes an incredible amount of water to make a single cotton tee shirt, so definitely things like that.

I will say for that one specifically, if you have any interest there is an episode, actually, there's two episodes of podcasts. You might find interesting, one is the podcast is called Mothers of Invention and the episode, it's at the end of season two, and I think it's called; You Probably Have Everything You Need. So they talk a lot about fast fashion in that and just, in general, some of the production processes for making clothes. And then my friend, Nicole Antoinette, who, if you don't know her already, you will read about her in the book. But she has a podcast called Real Talk Radio, and there's an episode she did on fast fashion, gosh, it must've been like last August, that was really interesting as well and it was also about personal style, I should revisit that one.

Anyways, so those are two that you might find interesting, but yeah, it sounds like such a simple thing to kind of just look at something and try and imagine the resources that went into making it. But I don't know, it, I guess, helps me acknowledge the source which also serves as an inspiration to use the item to its fullest potential, yeah.

This is a little bit longer, but I'm just going to read it. It says I like how you touched on what I sometimes think of as the dark side of minimalism. So that would have been in my last recording. Essentially, the focus on decluttering without thinking about what happens to decluttered items or the resources that went into making them in the first place, that dark side also includes consumerism and over-consumption. The minimalism/simple living space doesn't always get to the root of consumerism. I found myself shifting my consumption patterns instead of addressing the root problem. Can you talk about how you've perhaps dug even deeper into the darker side of your consumption tendencies, if that's even on your mind? Is that on my mind?

I had nothing prepared for this, not that I did for the others. I just wrote down a couple of names of programs, et cetera. Have I dug deeper into my consumption tendencies? So what I will say is that I think the shopping ban that I did in 2014, and I actually did it for two years so ended in 2016 was the beginning of all of this, that is what I'm recognizing now. So I learned a lot that year by essentially having to just hit pause for an entire year. And every single time I thought of buying something, hitting pause and having to sit and think about why I was buying it.

I do think that the shopping ban or the reason I was actually successful with it, it wasn't just because I had accountability, which the blog definitely helped with at the time. But I think a huge reason that I actually completed it was because I always looked at it like an experiment, which means that it was a learning experience rather than a reason to punish myself or beat myself up about anything. And that's just like a sort of a beginning kind of sidebar to this. So I think that was sort of the beginning. I would say that I have continued to look at both my spending and the things that I spend money on. So the reasons I spend or the impulses or whatever comes up and then, what I'm spending it on. I've continued to look at that over the years.

And I've also, at least in this past year, been doing a lot of therapy, not around this stuff, but I think in working through other things, it creates space for... it's not like you ever move on from them, but I sort of look at like, "Okay, here's a problem. I'm working through it." And I was like, once you've created that space where you don't have that problem in your life, you can start to see other layers of things or other things that you just haven't addressed yet.

So I do think that more thoughts continue to come up. I have this like very blanket statement that would sound so out of nowhere without knowing the full context of what I've been working through in therapy, but actually, you know what, I'll share it with you and maybe just not give you full context but part of me thinks that if you've ever done any amount of therapy or just even thought about your own personal development, you might get this. And if not, I think you can hold space for it for me.

So something that I have recognized in this past year of therapy is that, I think, all of the things I have been working on, which started as experiments and, or just like things that I was doing. I had to decide, I wasn't going to drink alcohol to cover up my feelings anymore. I wasn't going to sort of binge consume food to, again, cover up my feelings. What it all is now boiling down to for me or where I'm at right now with it all is that I have some very sort of classic abandonment issues, I guess, is the easiest way to put it.

And I actually don't really feel emotional about that statement at all. It's just stuff that I guess I've never properly looked at before until this year. And again, if you've read *The Year of Less*, some of this also won't surprise you. But I did obviously grow up with a stepdad who fully accepted me and welcomed me into his life, legally adopted me, all of that. But I did still grow up in a way where I have actual language that I remember hearing about how my real dad didn't want me and all this stuff. And I'm not laughing about this, but it's funny to me right now, that so much of what comes up as adults or the way that we are acting out our things as adults all starts from when we were kids. And I'm only laughing at myself because it feels cliché and also it makes so much sense.

So in a way that doesn't, or maybe I've completely derailed this question, but digging deeper into my own consumption tendencies, it's just interesting for me to see that so much of what I was doing... So many of the ways I was acting out in my life was essentially to fill that up, to sort of heal what, obviously, felt like avoid feelings of being not enough, unworthy. A lot of it comes back to stuff from when I was a child and it's not just related to my biological father, but yeah, sort of just some abandonment stuff that I have been working through, and all of which is to say that over these past six plus years, we could say eight years almost for not drinking, what's really been happening here has been me almost challenging myself to prove to myself that I'm worthy of whatever it is that I think I want and that I'm enough, yeah.

It's just interesting, I think, at least, for me, I'll speak just for myself. It's almost like I don't want those to be the answers sometimes because you don't, or I, just me, I don't want to just be put into a box with a label and it's like, "Oh, that's my classic problem. And no wonder I'm X, Y, Z, and do one, two, three things." It's like, I fight that for some reason, and yet it's also been really interesting in therapy, how figuring some of this out, just some of it this year has made me feel freer in a way, it's almost given me new tools to keep working through it all and to find kind of my confidence and worth in some other things.

All of which is to say that I've shared a bit online and here just about how this past year has been incredibly difficult in some ways. And what's also interesting is that I can also say with all honesty that I feel somehow more confident and I guess trusting of myself than I ever have, which is very strange, very strange. But yeah, I don't know, that is so not what the answer that you wanted to that question and I'm giving it to you and I'm not even going to try to fix it because that's where it went. Thank you for just holding space for that.

Okay, these are five somewhat shorter questions, which might be great. Wow, we've already been at this for half an hour. Do you love how I always say we, I do just feel like you're here with me, but I'm very aware that at this exact moment, I'm sitting in a chair in my dad's yard. Oh my gosh, by myself. My brother is actually visiting from Calgary right now, which is nice. But if my brother looked out the window and saw me, he would wonder why I'm sitting alone with headphones and holding paper in my hands. There's your visual. And I was only doing this because Kiwi is not home tonight. So if he was, there'd be a lot of barking happening or I would be throwing a ball at the same time as talking.

So five maybe shorter questions. First one, since the pandemic, have you found yourself buying more things or accumulating stuff? I have, and I can't decide if this feels okay or not. How do you know if you feel okay about the purchases you're making? Oh, I feel like this is a two parter. Have I found myself buying more things or accumulating? I liked that actually it gave me this visual of has sitting still meant I'm surrounding myself with more stuff? The short answer to this is actually yes. Yes and, yes and, being, I don't see it as a bad thing, but I'll explain a little bit about why. Have I found myself buying more things? I think I'll be really specific here and share what the things are.

So the more things that I have been buying were books in the beginning. And you know what's interesting about this one is that I've been hearing this from a lot of people that a lot of people have been saying that they have been, or were buying a lot right at the beginning of the pandemic. I am not immune to this. And just to say that I completely get it. I do think that... All right, oh, sorry. I do not think that what I was doing was really emotional shopping. What I do think that I was doing was trying to get comfortable with this idea that I was going to be home for an unknown and much longer period of time than I had expected. And in that, I noticed this was sort of selling myself on something, which is like, Oh, I really want to research stuff for, I kind of have a third book idea. So I started buying books being like, "I'm totally going to do a bunch of research for my new book."

And I'm sure I'm going to read them at one point, but I can tell you right now that I have not actually opened any of those books beyond one of them. So I don't know, I bought like five books they're just sitting there. And I think this is a thing that I'm, or this is the thing that I'm hearing from some others is kind of this idea of I'll start some new projects or I'll finally do this thing that's been on my mind. What I did notice in that specifically, or it's a reflection, I guess, more on reading, is that what I've noticed in myself is that I actually have not been able to read a ton of nonfiction during the pandemic. I have now that we're five months into this, I have now read a few nonfiction books. But I actually found, I think it's because we were learning so much, we were constantly taking in news and new information.

But I actually, I don't know, I just could not read nonfiction. I could not pick up a book that I was going to learn from in the beginning of all of this. So that's probably just, or that's not an excuse, but it was just adding to this thought of, "Cait you know better. You shouldn't have maybe bought those five books just yet," but such is life. I did also buy a few other things though. So one is that I bought a plant for my room which I am very proud to say is still alive. Proud because that answer comes with pure shock. Nothing less than absolute shock and awe that I have kept something alive because that is something I've never been able to do before.

So I bought a plant and I also bought just these hooks. I had lights, but I bought these hooks to put on my wall to light up or to string up some Christmas lights above my bed. And that was more a measure of, I mean you know this, or you now know this, if you've listened to the first episode or recording of these things is that I was supposed to be traveling this year. And instead, because of the pandemic, I'm at my dad's house. And I wanted to turn what is typically just the room that has my bed, and desk and dresser into something that actually feels cozy and like a bit of a sanctuary. And so, finally I pulled out pictures of mine that were in storage downstairs and I hung them on the wall and then I strung up these lights.

I just had this thought of this setup at my dad's, it's a really small room. So I actually don't have a way of adding a lamp right beside my bed. And I thought, "I want to be cozy and read in bed at night." And so I strung up some Christmas lights. I bought these little hooks that I could just put on the wall and string them up. I also bought a watch, which is, I honestly can't tell you why, except that it felt like this decision that I've been thinking about for a long time. And I just sort of said to myself, why am I not doing it? And I have one more planned purchase that I'm going to tell you about next. But the watch question was so interesting because I almost like had this story in my head that because I've never been someone who wore a watch before that, that is who I always am. And that held me back from buying something that I was thinking about all the time.

Isn't that interesting how we do that? Like we just think that because we were one way for it say the first 35 years of our life, that that is who we have to be forever, but now I have a watch. I wear it every single day, and it is great. I also have this idea of buying a bike, a bicycle and a helmet. And this is one that I've been sitting with, truly, since the beginning of the pandemic. And if I went back further, I would say that I've been talking about buying a bike for probably three, or four, even five years now. Just the fact that I just said those words out loud for the first time, does that not sound ridiculous? I have been talking about buying a bike, but I never do it.

I do think there are two different reasons for this, one, I have not been on a bike since I was probably 16 years old. Let's just say 20 years, I have not been on a bike for, let's say 20 years. And I think I genuinely have some fear, not that I won't know how to ride a bike, I don't think you forget how to do that, but kind of those initial fears of what is it like to get back on a bike? What is it like to bike on streets again? What is it going to be like to do all of this stuff that I just haven't done in more than half my lifetime? So I think there's this little barrier of fear and question marks that I have around it.

The other is a story. So I have been telling myself this story, that there is no reason for me to buy a bike when I travel all the time. I don't know when I'll be able to travel again. I don't know about you, but I don't know when I'll be able to do that again. So why am I still depriving myself of that? Also, I don't have to buy some brand new and expensive bike. I don't know what I'm worried about here in terms of initial cost or anything like that, but I've been doing a bit more research lately. I'm like, "It can be a really affordable thing to get into."

I'm not talking about mountain biking, just a regular bicycle. I will buy a brand new helmet, but the bike, it just... So I'm settled on the fact that I'm going to finally buy myself a bike because, A, I'm a little bit afraid, but I'm not too afraid anymore. And B, because I can change that story. I don't know why I'm

depriving myself just because, yes, in the future I will travel a lot and I will not use the bike all the time, but why wouldn't I have one for when I'm at home?

You did have a second part to this, which is how do you know if you feel okay about the purchases you're making? For me, that answer is actually really simple. It's just, if I start using it right away, if I don't, then it's sort of like a delayed guilt. But if I start using it right away, then I feel completely fine about the purchase. I going to move on because I'm realizing how rambly I'm getting here. Next question, how do you navigate supporting small, sustainable or ethical businesses/artists/makers without letting your old shopping habits come back? The simple answer to that is that I just add those businesses to maybe the list of options I would look at when I'm making future purchases.

So that is something I do think about with fashion, very specifically, because we've been talking about this. First of all, I would be more open to thrifting than I was when I was younger. But second of all, I will pull up the odd website or thing that I've found, an article I found that might list a few Canadian companies to purchase from and including small businesses, but I will kind of collect the resources and then when it is time to actually buy something, then I will look at the website. But I think that's probably a big part of it is that I don't browse very... in general, I just don't browse. So it's sort of like collecting the websites for when it is time to make them purchase. That's probably a big one.

I guess the other piece of that is that if I find a business that looks cool or someone that I want to support, maybe I don't necessarily need something from them, but I will still bookmark it and then say, I don't want to buy a ton of gifts. I think friends and I are sort of past that, or it's just not something we really do anymore, but the odd time a year, there's a few times a year where I will buy a few things and I will go and support makers more then. So if there was someone whose work I really liked, I might buy something from them to give to someone else.

Ooh, okay. This is actually a big topic. And I might boil it down to this question, which is that it takes privilege to choose the ethically or sustainably made option when we make new purchases. The question simply being, do you have any thoughts on this topic? I could actually sum this up by saying, yes, it does take an incredible amount of privilege, especially when we look at how much it costs to buy these things. Not just that we have maybe the freedom to browse, to buy things online, to wait for it. We're buying these things that we don't technically need right away. There's privileged just in that, but the privilege and the cost.

The short answer to that is, in my thought is just, we need to acknowledge it. And also, at least where I'm at with it right now is that if we are in a position that we can make those decisions, this is one of those moments where I think it makes sense to use your privilege in that sense. Now, by that, I mean, I don't think we need to announce to the world that we've purchased from all of these companies and that makes us such amazing consumers or anything like that.

I think it's a way that those of us who have that money, if you do have the money to make fewer but more expensive decisions throughout the year that might be better for the environment for local communities, et cetera, et cetera, working conditions of staff who ended up... like employees who make the products that you're buying. If we are in that position, it is a vote with our dollars. And if more of our dollars are going towards into saying that we want better practices, overall if you underlined it as that as the main theme it is a way to vote for our dollars. So I guess there's this piece where I'm like, we should be using it.

Hi, hello, hello, you and me, are we back together now? I'm going to try and be the least disruptive I can with this coming back or trying to bring things back here, but I'm also going to tell you that my phone died in the middle of recording this whole thing. And the funniest piece of that is that I didn't know. I don't look at my phone when I'm doing this. I try to just keep it on my lap or keep it to the side and I

don't look at it and the screen actually goes black anyways and so I just didn't look. And it didn't make any kind of noise, I'm just continuing to talk to myself out here. And based on, because obviously, I'm back to the recording, fortunately, it was there for the first 40 something minutes of it were there, but I had to go back and relisten to the ending.

Fortunately, it actually ended up kind of a great place. I can pick up a little bit from where I just was, but yeah, that was kind of a good ending-ish to that question, but I'm going to try to pick up here, so I'm just shifting. So I guess summing up the question around, if not, it wasn't even a question and really, I don't think it was, did I have thoughts around the fact that it takes privilege to choose maybe the more ethically or sustainably made products when we are making purchases? I mean, I have thoughts that are around minimalism and privilege in general, but I feel like so many of them can be summed up with this idea that our privilege can make us feel uncomfortable, to look at it and address it. And I think if we have it, it is important to use it.

And I think I kind of said this, but I don't know. And this is a little bit flippant of me to say, but I don't think that that means we need to announce all of the ethical or sustainable purchases that we make. And I certainly don't think it makes us the best minimalists or anything like that. I also I don't believe, this is one of my biggest problems with minimalism is that it is literally sold as a lifestyle. It is sold as like, these are the things that make you a good minimalist. That bothers me on a whole other level also, just that it's a whole nother set of consumerism or another aspect of consumerism. So I don't think that we need to be announcing that we're the best minimalist to anybody. Not that sharing the companies you're supporting is a bad thing, I think that's important, but it doesn't make you the best with the minimalist, I guess is the best way to say it. I just think that if you do have that kind of spending power, it is important to use it.

Maybe it's very hopeful or wishful thinking, but I don't know, where I'm at right now with all of this is that, or with this specific topic, is that if we are able to put less of our dollars into companies that we don't want to support and more of them into companies that we do, I can only hope and wish that that would mean we would end up with, I don't know, an economy that we didn't completely hate. One that we felt even just slightly better about. But yeah, there's so much I can say truly under this topic. There was a lot around minimalism and just the values of it, the way that it is sold. The way it is sold, first of all, there's a problem literally in that statement. But those are the values that people who have less than others just have to live by anyways.

This is really something I wish I could sit down and have like a group discussion with, I think, especially, I think, would this be interesting? I don't know, like with other people who are in the space. I did an interview once that it was with CBC that had two other writers and content creators on, one of whom was Colin Wright, who some of you may or may not have heard of before. And I think it was refreshing to hear the other people in the space feel this.

So, I don't know, it'd be interesting to have kind of a round table discussion at some point. I don't even know what that looks like. This is me talking as though I'm someone who hosts round table discussions, but I just think it would be interesting to have a discussion with more people in this space. So it wasn't just one of us or a couple of us kind of acknowledging it. It would just be interesting to share more of our thoughts, what that look like things that we can learn from others and learn from each other of like how to address this?

But I truly think it's not just this black and white thing or the solution is not just this black and white thing of it should make us just feel guilty or ashamed of, I think it's really instead looking at how do we use our privilege for good? And if one teeny tiny aspect of that is making spending decisions that could, I

mean, like I said, maybe wishful thinking, but ultimately, maybe it changed our economy even ever so slightly one day, we should be doing that where we can.

Okay, last question isn't a question it's a bunch of statements, which I love because it feels so open. So you wrote, I'm always interested in money if you're still interested in talking about it, which I am, and then it just says money and your values, how you're earning, saving, and spending it these days. Let's start with the earning and go from there, actually, almost going backwards, kind of. How I'm earning it. I am in a very unique position right now where 100% of my income is coming from books. So my full-time income, full-time job is as an author. That means that my income is book advances. So like for adventures and also royalties that I'm earning from *The Year of Less*.

And I'm learning a lot even just around, so I've now had two book deals. It's really interesting to see that book deals can come in lots of different shapes and forms. The most explicit way I can explain this is just to give you the details. So you can sell it in say English, you can sell it in world rights, which means that your publisher gets to sell it in other languages on your behalf, if you just sell English, then your agent or someone else you hire gets to try and find foreign language deals.

Your audio can be sold with your book deal, or it can be sold separately. If it's sold separately, that means you earn or you get separate paychecks just for audio. It's just really interesting. So it's getting a little bit confusing because last year I would say I earned all my money in few larger payments. This year is proving to be more payments, but less amounts, but all adding up to the same kind of thing. And the one thing I will say about this is that it feels very temporary, just meaning, I don't know how long this will last. I don't know how long I will be able to make a living as an author. And I think that is one of the reasons that some of my values have shifted, I got to save values for last.

It's also the being self-employed, this is especially been true for the past five years that I've essentially been self-employed, I guess that's what I call this period of life even as an author. I don't have a so-called business per se, but I don't work for anyone in particular. So what I would say I've learned in the five years of self-employment, is that the way I manage my money, meaning earning, yes, but how I spend and save is different every single year. So the way I saved last year even is different from this year. And especially different because of the pandemic. This adds just a whole different layer to it. So sort of top level stuff. I still save for retirement.

It's still not near what I used to save when I had a full-time job. The reason I'm sharing that more than anything is because I think this is one of the things that we or on the internet, it can make... some people are like it just seems as though you can glorify self employment and I've been self employed for five years and I can tell you that I would have saved more for retirement if I'd have a full-time job. So yeah, I'm happy with where I'm at right now but it's still not quite what I would have been doing before and that's just a lot. That's just because of things like, at some point I have to think about taxes. My tax rate, it's, let's say 30%, maybe a little bit less of my income. So I've got to save for that or set aside for that.

Retirement is kind of the next top thing. I do always like to have cash on hand, so essentially, you could call it just savings or an emergency fund, I like to have some amount of cash on me. And what has changed this year, very specifically, is that because I cannot travel this year, I'm saving for travel. So it's more of like a mental trick. It's something that I'm doing to make me feel hopeful that I will be able to travel again in the future. Maybe if I'm building up some amount of savings, that will feel good so that whenever I can book a plane ticket safely, the money will be there and that'll be really nice.

The pandemic is definitely also shifting how I'm spending. So I've already shared some of the purchases I have made this year. One that I would like to make, the bike, I hope to tell you more about that when I've actually done it. Honestly, it's my goal. My goal is to be able to tell you by the end of all of these that

I have purchased a bike and that I have ridden it, at least one, if not two long bike rides. These are my goals, you can hold me to them. So it's definitely changed my spending. The pandemic plus the fact that I don't actually know how much money I'll make in 2021, that has shifted so that I just don't want to spend a lot of money.

I don't like to grasp money too tightly. This is where the practical side of me gets a little more unlike the woo-woo side of things. But I don't like to grasp my money because I genuinely feel like if I'm grasping it then I can go back into having a scarcity mindset, which is what I lived with for a really long time and I don't like that. I do want to have an abundant mindset around money, and I do want to trust that money can come easily, and just to be open to it, to be open to money rather than kind of shut off to it in any way. But I am finding that I've been, we could say, more frugal than usual this year in terms of it, because I just don't know about my income for next year.

And so, I don't want to find myself in a position where I just don't have enough. And also, because of the pandemic, there are absolutely ways that I could... let's say I needed to go get a job, there's no part of my ego that is attached to being self-employed so I could definitely go... see myself getting a job one day if I ever needed money from a more traditional source. But yeah, because of pandemic, I don't know what kinds of jobs are out there or will be out there. So yeah, I would say I'm not spending as freely.

And my values, again, this shifts just slightly every year. You'll actually read about this a little bit... Please don't sting me. A bee literally just landed on my arm twice, so. You'll read a little bit about this in the book, but I definitely noticed one of my values shift, even more so, in 2019, which is around just environmentalism. And I mean, you will not be surprised by that based on what I've shared already in this. But just looking at our resources, not wanting to use more than I need, and that shows up with my money, that shows up with thoughts around not only what I'm spending, but actual so what I'm giving.

Last year, I became a member of something that's called One Percent for the Planet which I also actually right off the bat, you do not need to sign up for just because I've said it. I think it's really important to acknowledge that that happens a lot where we hear about something from someone and we immediately go sign up for it. And so, nobody needs to go sign up for this. But it was something that, I think, helped me stay accountable in my first year of noticing these interests or these values becoming a bit stronger. And essentially, the idea is that you sign up, you pay a small membership fee, you sign up and then you are accountable to donating at least 1% of your income to environmental nonprofits or maybe charity, yeah, charities as well, but environmental causes.

That has not changed at all. I signed up again in 2020. I imagine I'll sign up again in 2021. Where I'm noticing the shift is that I don't know that I'm going to need to be accountable anymore, it helped, definitely, for my first year. What was also interesting about it is that it helped me do research or it helped me with the research. It took away some of the barriers of entry, we could say, to finding causes that I was interested in because every cause that is listed on the One Percent for the Planet kind of directory they've gone through their own set of, I guess, criteria that they work through with the company to get listed.

So now that I have found some I like, I don't know that I'll need to keep renewing kind of thing. But maybe I will, but at the same time, I don't know. But it was helpful. So I started with that, then I sort of noticed, in general, last year, and I guess something I can share that happened just last month in July, is that I started thinking about the fact that in 2019, and also in the first even six months of this year, so let's say the past 18 months, I've donated more money than I've ever been able to before. And that feels good and fine, and I have no questions about sort of where I donated to, or the amounts, or anything like that. But I also started recognizing that I wasn't sure it felt good that I was donating to so many different places rather than just picking maybe a handful.

And so, what I did last month was I literally went through all of my receipts for donations and found that I had donated to something like, it was something like 18 different causes plus Patreon. So I supported some people on Patreon plus there're just a couple other sort of nontraditional ways that I consider giving or that I kind of added in some giving. So essentially, just being let's say like 19 or 20 different ways that I was giving money or things that I was giving money to. I grabbed that and I then started looking at everything being, has my giving been under any categories, are there major themes coming up with what I've been giving to?

And two actually came up, it was interesting. One doesn't surprise me at all. The number one place that the majority of my money went to was, we could just call it maybe as like towards climate change or towards environmentalism? You can figure out a label for that. But that was the number one sort of category. The second was kind of interesting to me, which is that I would have... I guess we could put it under the title of writers. But that being actually part of it was that I'm a monthly donor or member to an environmental investigative journalism kind of online newspaper here in Canada, it's called The Narwhal. And so, that, I guess, could still go under environmentalism. But a huge thing for me that I noticed last year was that I felt so grateful that I got to make a living as a writer, that I wanted to support other writers and content creators, so yeah.

There's also a really interesting program based in Vancouver that is called The Writers' Exchange. I actually haven't really properly connected with anyone there, but from everything I've seen, I really like the work that they're doing with youth and literacy, so that felt cool. I would just say that is something that is shifting even more so for me right now. I've been thinking like the values piece, I think some of our values only get stronger, and then I think some of them shift or change entirely. And right now, I'm definitely noticing I have a lot of focus on what is happening just in the climate change space. We'll put it under that label, for now. Different things that are coming up, different programs, and people to support and stuff like that.

And also, it helps me look a bit both closer to home. I can look at some of the issues that are in and around, say, Vancouver Island, British Columbia. But it's also something that I want to think more about when I'm able to travel again, like learning a bit more about what the impacts will be one day or it could be one day in some of the places I'm visiting. That was kind of sidebar, but yeah, it's just interesting, it's interesting to see that, I think, once we become, at least once our... How do I word this? When our values become stronger and also our goals, it is almost just easier to make financial decisions. I've known that with saving, but now, in the past year or so, I guess I've been noticing it with giving as well, which is neat.

And actually, this will be really interesting or I'm excited to hear the rest of the stuff that comes up for this. But I could probably close it off with this, which is my friend, Chris, Chris Brown, he has a podcast called Popcorn Finance. If you ever want to listen to something where it's just kind of very short episode, I'm talking like five to 10 episodes per episode, usually... five to 10 minutes per episode, I hope I said that right. Chris has a great podcast where he picks a topic under the personal finance umbrella and shares it in... the idea is that he shares it in the amount of time it would take to make, let's say, a bowl of popcorn. I was going to say a bag of popcorn. I don't know if it takes 10 minutes to pop a bag of popcorn, but let's say a bowl if you're doing it on the stove, stovetop popcorn.

And he is about to celebrate his 200th episode, which is incredible to even think about. And he asked me, because I was a former guest, he asked me if I would share one thing that I have learned about myself and money in the past three years because that's how long he's been doing the show for. And the answer I gave him was the first thing that came to mind, which is that nothing I have right now, not only money actually, but the time I have right now, the freedom that I have right now, literally none of it is

worth anything if I'm not sharing it. Truly, it is just not worth anything if it is mine and mine alone. And I don't think I've said those words really out loud, but when I look at my spending and my giving from the past year and a half, that feels very true.

So yeah, I guess I'll leave it there. Sorry for the little disruption partway through. Wow, I actually didn't expect the rest of this to go for this long. Hopefully, the extra words here make up for it. And I don't know, just, I hope you had a beautiful weekend and have a great, great week ahead, depending on when you listen to this. And I won't be late again, I will not be late again. If I'm late again, the next one is due Friday, I don't have a calendar in front of me and I don't want to touch my phone in case I screw it up somehow, 22nd, no, 21st, something like that. If I'm late, I will owe all of you \$5 and you can hold me to it, but please give me until the end of the day, that day I will owe you all five bucks and I don't want to do that so I will get you the next one on time.

Thank you so much for the questions, great. Even just thoughtful statements that gave me something to go off of and I'm excited to hear what you think if there's, as you're thinking if anything came up and you want to send it over, feel free. I don't know if I need more questions, I think I've got enough for two more episodes. But if something feels really pertinent, let me know. And otherwise, I'm excited to record the next two and get them over your way soon. Okay friend, talk soon, bye!