

## Podcast Ep 10 - Why We Love Our Stuff

You're listening to the Wannabe Minimalist Show, Episode Number 10. On today's show we're talking about the science of why we love our stuff and what you can do to beat the subconscious voices in your head that you don't even hear.

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Welcome to the Wannabe Minimalist Show. I'm your host, Deanna Yates and each week on the podcast we will talk about what it really takes to be a minimalist with a family. I believe minimalism is a mindset for how we see stuff, but more importantly, being mindful of the items we let into our lives, homes, and relationships. Let's do this!

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Well, hello there. Welcome back to the last episode of 2019 of the Wannabe Minimalist Show. I'm your host, Deanna Yates from Little Green Bow dot com. As we wind down the end of the year and get ready to start a new decade I am excited to discuss this fascinating topic of the psychology of materialism and the science behind why we think the way we do about stuff.

I don't know about you, but I LOVE the New Year. It always feels like a clean slate and a fresh start. And as we start fresh, I wanted to help you see stuff and clutter in a new light. It's so interesting to learn about the science behind why we love our stuff and why we behave the way we do.

But, before we get into the fun details I wanted to tell you about my free private Wannabe Minimalist Group on Facebook. Starting on January 11th, me and a group of amazing women and men will be embarking on a whole house declutter for the start of a new DECADE. I'd love for you to join us!

It's a free challenge and the only catch is that you have to join an awesome new Facebook group filled with others just like you who are taking control of their life by taking control of their environment. I know...that was a trick because there is no catch.

I want to give back to my community and hosting this free challenge is one of my favorite ways to support you on your journey toward minimalism. All you have to do is head over to [LittleGreenBow.com](http://LittleGreenBow.com) forward slash challenge and join the Wannabe Minimalist Group on Facebook.

Even though the challenge is not starting until January 11th - you should join now and introduce yourself. I'll be in there posting and hosting some live videos to get us ready to dive into the new year. Once the challenge does begin, challenge posts will prompt you to take action in a new space around your home every day. You're going to love it! And I'll be with you every step of the way. Let's start the next decade in the right frame of mind, with less stuff, and more encouragement to live the life of our dreams.

So head on over to [LittleGreenBow.com/challenge](http://LittleGreenBow.com/challenge) and get ready for the most amazing 2020. I hope you will join me in the 21-day decluttering challenge. It's going to be amazing.

Now back to looking at why we love our stuff.

As I've been on this minimalist journey, I have been asking myself a few questions over and over. If I'm honest about why I'm asking these questions they mostly come back to my daughter. I want to know how can I help her live with less without feeling like I deprived her of something. I don't want her doing a 180 as an adult and becoming a hoarder or worse, resenting me for how she was raised. Instead, I want her to be a confident, self-assured woman who has a healthy relationship with stuff (and who does not have a ton of my stuff to deal with after I have passed away)

Please tell me I am not alone.

I'm going to go out on a limb and say I'm not.

So let's take a look at 3 questions that will help us discover why value our things so highly, why we seem to always want more and how to be happy with minimalism and decluttering.

Question 1...

### **Why do we love our stuff so much?**

In a TedEd Talk by Christian Jarrett, called *Why Are We So Attached to Our Things?*, he explains that our attachment to stuff begins at an early age and comes on quickly. From a young age, we believe that our things have a unique essence.

This was discovered through a study where researchers told children they had a special copy machine that could make exact replicas of their most favorite toys. When offered a choice between which toy to play with (theirs or the new copy), children overwhelmingly chose their toy.

While this might seem like a simplistic study, we can see this in our own lives. I even have an example from just this morning. I woke up before my husband and as the coffee pot finished brewing, I poured myself a cup and added my creamer. However, just as I was returning the creamer to the fridge, he joined me in the kitchen so I offered to make him up a cup of coffee too. The funny thing is that instead of offering him the already made up coffee (that I had not taken a sip of yet) I started to make up a new one. You see, I was thinking of the cup that I already made as "mine" and the next one would be his.

So silly right? The two cups of coffee would be identical in the end so why was I assigning ownership? The amount of coffee and creamer in them would be the same. The temperature would be the same. Shoot, even the mugs are identical so a stranger would not be able to tell them apart!

Because I was working on writing this episode, I caught myself in the act and gave him the already made up cup of coffee. Then, I finished making myself a new one and got on with finishing up this episode. But, can you see how this plays out over and over in our daily interactions?

Once we own something and claim it, play with it or use it, we attach all sorts of emotions and feelings to it. So much that we over value that item.

This phenomenon is called the Endowment effect and there are a few studies that show how this works in real life.

One of the most famous is The Mug Experiment from 1990 where professors assigned students into groups of sellers and buyers. The sellers were given a coffee mug and asked what price they were willing to sell it. The buyers were also asked at what price they were willing to buy the mug. Even though the sellers only “owned” the mug for a few minutes (and never even used it), the average sell price of \$7.12 was over 2 times the average buying price of \$2.87. Just because the mug was owned, it became that much more valuable to the owner. If the owners had been the buyers, they would not have over valued the cup.

In another study, a large group of students were given one of two objects. Half of the students in the experiment were given coffee mugs as a gift. The other half were given chocolate bars. The mugs and candy bars were of similar monetary value. Once all of the items were given out, the students had the option to trade if they liked. Since the items were handed out randomly, the professors expected about 50% would want to trade their items. However, only 10% were interested in trading.

The endowment effect was officially established. Once the students started to feel ownership of an object, they favored it even through ownership was randomly selected.

### **So if we're so attached to the things we already own, why do we want MORE?**

The biggest reason we want more in our lives is because we don't take a minute to appreciate all the amazing things we have. As the famous quote from Rabbi Schachtel goes - Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have.

Wanting is like a bottomless pit. There will always be more...more clothes to buy, more money to make, more gadgets to get. Think about the richest person you know. It's unlikely you personally know Jeff Bezos. So no matter who you were thinking of...there is someone with more money than them.

Now think of the happiest person you know. That person is probably not the richest person you know. We don't need a scientific study to show us that more does not equal happiness, but it's a hard mind shift for a lot of people to make.

The problem is that if we don't take a minute to appreciate all that we have and be grateful for our lives, it is easy to take it all for granted and to continuously want more. And the crazy thing is that more stuff is not what makes us happy.

It's the dopamine spike we're in search of...that blast of energy and satisfaction we get when we buy something new, eat something delicious, or do something that excites us.

The good news is that you can get that feeling of satisfaction without having to buy or acquire stuff. Instead you can keep the good feelings coming by exercising, getting enough sleep, listening to upbeat music, meditating, and getting outside in the sun. It can also be helpful to spend time with people you love or volunteer helping others.

Another easy way to get off the hamster wheel of always wanting more is to take a few minutes each day to express gratitude for what you have. You can do this with a gratitude journal, morning meditations or affirmations, or just listing something you are grateful for before your

head hits the pillow at night. We've also experimented with saying what we are grateful for at dinner time, but I will admit that has yet to become a habit for us.

**Which brings me to the last question I want to look at...**

**How can we let go of these feelings and be happy with decluttering and minimalism?**

One of the best ways to let go of things and be happy with decluttering is to shift your mindset and find intangible things to value instead.

We see this play out over and over in movies and visions of the end scene in *It's a Wonderful Life* just popped in my head.

Intangible things like health, time, community, and self-worth are things you can't buy with money, but are more valuable than things.

For instance, while you can purchase health insurance, it's best not to need to use it in the first place. We can increase our health by eating well and working out. Find an activity you enjoy doing, get outside as much as possible, enjoy your favorite treats in moderation, and eat lots of colorful fruits and veggies everyday.

Time is another finite resource that we cannot purchase. However, by embracing minimalism and living with less stuff, you can save time by not having to sort through all of your stuff in order to find something or to clean all the time. This gives you time to follow your passions and spend your precious time doing the things you love.

Let's look at community - another valuable resource that you cannot buy with money. Community is the feeling you get when you are with your family and friends. It's the feeling of belonging so it can also include groups and social organizations you are part of. Humans are social beings so we long to be part of something bigger than just ourselves.

And finally, self-worth. This is one of the most valuable things you can give yourself in life. Self worth makes you see that you do not need to fill your life with stuff. You can assign the appropriate value to things vs. people. You can bounce back from failure and see obstacles as learning experiences instead of the end of the world.

If this is something you are struggling with, I have a list of 10 mindset shifts to overcome clutter in my Minimalist Starter Kit for families. It's free and you can download a copy by going to [LittleGreenBow.com/starter-kit](http://LittleGreenBow.com/starter-kit).

I hope you found this episode as interesting as I did. I just scratched the surface regarding the science of stuff and why we as humans value the things that we (or someone special to us) own. Perhaps knowing the underlying psychology of the Endowment Effect or taking a minute to appreciate all that you already have will help you along your minimalism journey. I sure hope it does.

Just remember, you have the power to pause, take a breath, and look at your stuff with an open mind. Use the 10 mindset shifts in my Minimalism Starter Kit for Families and start to value the intangible things more than the material objects. Before you know it, you'll be happily skipping down your minimalist journey with less stuff and a big smile on your face.

Now, I have a question for you...how are you going to apply the lessons we learned today about why we love our stuff and how to stop always needing more by incorporating gratitude as you move into the new year? Or if you happen to be listening to this later on, just as you move into all the things you want to do in your life. I'd love for you to jump over to the Wannabe Minimalist Facebook group, it's totally free. You can search for us on Facebook. Again it's the Wannabe Minimalist Facebook Group. And I want you to share one of the ways you are going to start being grateful for all of the things you have. I can't wait to hear from you and help encourage you on your journey toward less stuff and more happiness. So jump on over to the Facebook group and let me know what you are thinking.

If you liked this episode, I would love it if you would subscribe and leave a comment or rating so others can find this show too. I'll see you next week when I can't believe it will be the new year and a new decade. Take care and have an AMAZING New Year!

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So, this episode is might be over, but we don't have to say goodbye just yet. Head over to my website, [LittleGreenBow.com](http://LittleGreenBow.com) for tons of great resources, freebies, courses, and a link to join my free Wannabe Minimalist group on Facebook. Let's tackle this thing together.

And if you loved this episode it would be really helpful if you left a rating or review so more families can find the show.

You're awesome!

Thanks and see you next week.