

Creating the Elegance of Simplicity & Focus in Your Work Day

Our days can feel like a crazy sea of distraction, stress, busyness and overwhelm.

We can get lost in that sea, and it's hard to figure out how to find mindfulness and focus in the middle of it all.

The answer, I've repeatedly found, is in the *pure elegance of simplicity*.

Simplify to find focus. Simplify to find peace. Simplify to find a way through the sea of chaos.

Let's look at some things you can do today to create the elegance of simplicity and focus in your life.

Simplify to Clear Distractions

The distraction of multitasking and technology can be hard to overcome. But it drains away our mindfulness, effectiveness, and life energy. So let's do something about it.



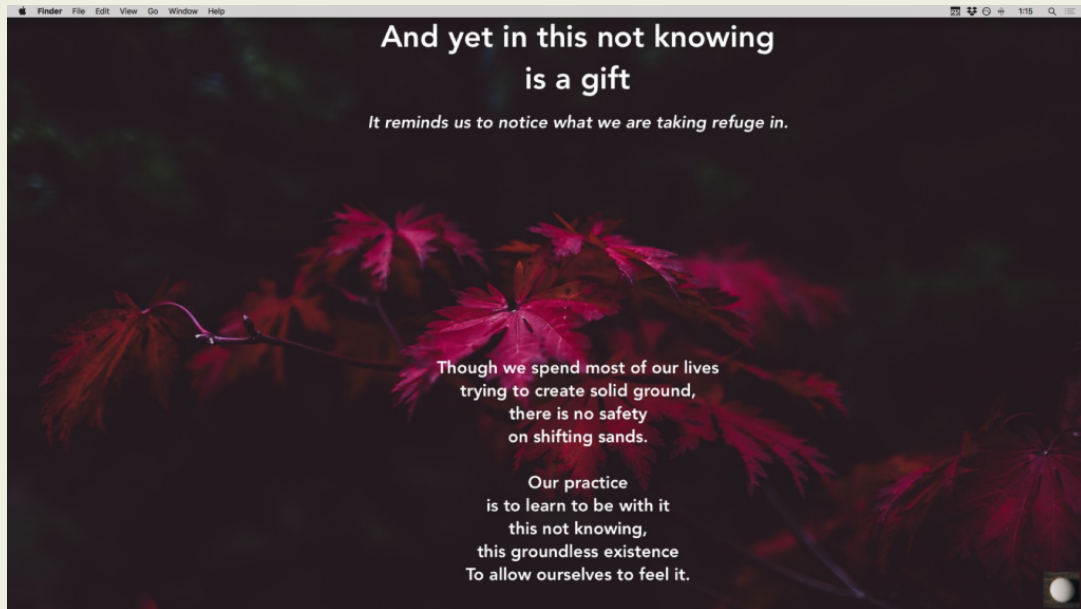
Let's start with the phone. I recently decided to go minimalist with my iPhone ("Throw it away!", you might suggest!) ... and I simplified:

1. Put all apps into one folder. I call mine "uncertainty" to remind me that everything lives in uncertainty.
2. Keep the dock & homescreen clear. No tempting apps to click on. Instead, I use the

search function to open an app, requiring myself to type in the name, which makes me think about what I'm doing.

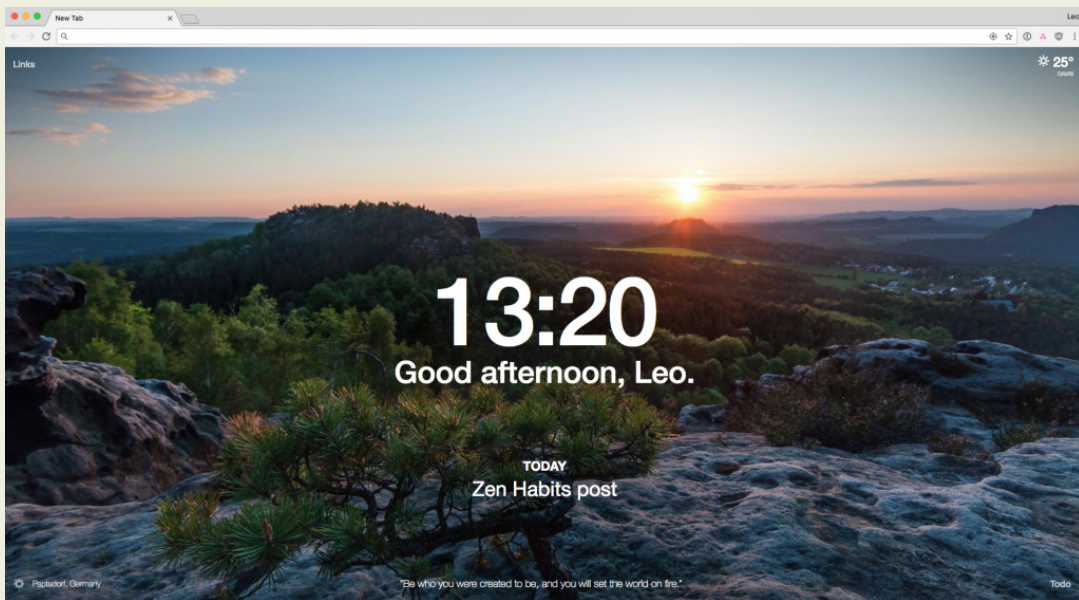
3. Shut off almost all notifications.
4. Choose a simple and beautiful background to remind me to be mindful when using the phone.

See my empty home screen, 2nd screen with just my meditation app, and 3rd screen with my single folder.



Let's move on to the computer, which has some similar steps (these instructions are for a Mac but Windows/Linux users could use similar ideas):

1. **Clear your desktop** (put all files into one folder, or several). Put a nice wallpaper in the background.
2. **Clear the dock.** Instead, use a search app to open apps, such as Alfred, Spotlight or Launchbar.
3. **Turn off most notifications.**
4. **Single-task.** Close all apps but the one(s) you're using.



And now let's talk about the browser ... I use Chrome, but you could find similar things for whatever you use:

1. **Single tab.** Close everything else. If it's important, throw it into a read-later service, bookmark it, or put it into your todo manager.
2. **Close your email program.** When you open it, open with intention, and clear out the inbox as much as you can. Then close it.
3. **Use the Momentum add-on** to keep yourself focused and mindful.

I like single-tasking apps, at full screen, like Ommwriter, when I'm writing or doing other work outside of the browser.

Outside of the phone and computer, I like to keep a notebook of my tasks for the day (bullet journal style). And I keep my desk as clear as possible.

Simplifying your physical and digital workspaces will help you be less distracted, and more able to focus on a single task.

Simplify Your Intention & Focus

As much as possible, it's best to focus on a single task at a time. With intention.

That means, instead of constantly switching around (the default mode for many of us), it's best to pick one thing and set aside some time (10 minutes, half an hour, etc.) to focus on just that thing. If it's important enough to take up your attention and time, it's important enough to give it the space for complete focus.

When you clear everything aside, before you dive fullbore into the task, ask yourself, "What

is my intention here?" If it's to help your team, help your client, help your family, help yourself have a better life ... it will help you connect your task to something meaningful.

Perhaps the intention is just to learn to focus better. Maybe it's to push into discomfort and uncertainty. Maybe it's to be mindful and joyful as you work. Whatever your intention, set it consciously.

Then get started, with focus. Don't let yourself do anything else, even if you feel the urge to switch. At least for 10 minutes.

Simplify by setting intention and keeping your focus on one thing at a time, as much as you're able. This is a practice, which means you won't be perfect at it, but daily practice helps you get better.

The Elegance of Simplicity

As you narrow your focus on fewer things, simplify your workspace so that there are fewer distractions, and practice single-minded focus with intention ... things start to change.

It's like the reverse of how the distraction of technology and social media changes our brains. Our brains seem to become calmer, more at peace, when we find joy in the elegance of simplicity.

It's the elegance of nothing but you, your meditation cushion, and your breath. There is nothing to distract you from the single-minded practice of being here in this moment, practicing with groundlessness.

It's the elegance of nothing but you and your yoga mat, as you sink into child's pose and then start a sun salutation, nothing to distract you from the single-minded practice of being with your breath and movement.

It's the elegance of nothing but you and your notebook, as you journal or sketch. The elegance of you and nature, as you head out for a morning run. The elegance of you and the barbell, the kettlebell, or the hill that you're tackling.

It's the pure elegance of simplicity, and it is found in the paring down.

The Zen Productivity Workshop

I'm excited to announce the first in a series of workshops I hope to hold in the next year or two ... the Zen Productivity Workshop.

It's coming first to NYC and San Francisco (in November) and then L.A. and San Diego (in December). More dates and cities to be announced in the near future.

Sign up now for the early bird discount (\$50 off the regular price).

In this workshop, I'll be talking about finding focus, simplicity, mindfulness and quiet, while focusing on high-impact tasks that have meaning in our lives.

I'll be talking about how to overcome procrastination by pushing into uncertainty. I'll talk about how to deal with stress and anxiety in the middle of your overwhelming day. And how to bring mindfulness and joy into more of your day.

I'll share a number of practices I've been developing, in a system I'm calling Zen Productivity.

Read more here, and sign up today!