

The Ultimate Productivity, Simplicity, Finance, Happiness & Weight Loss Hack

I'll share the ultimate hack in just two words: **letting go**.

These two words, if practiced and lived, can be the key to all the self-improvement in your life:

- **Productivity:** By letting go of trying to do everything, or be updated about everything, you can focus on just what's important. This simple focus can make you incredibly effective, and you'll accomplish more.
- **Simplicity:** Our lives get filled with clutter and complexity when we constantly want to add things. By letting go of what we want to have, and some of what we already, we can simplify, declutter, create space, let go of complexity.
- **Finances:** Our finances would be much better if we didn't spend so much. Of course, you could argue that we could just earn more, which is true. But spending less and earning more is actually better than all of that! Anyway. Letting go of things we want to spend on is the key to better finances. More on that below.
- **Happiness:** When we are frustrated with someone, disappointed with ourselves, unhappy with our situation, angry at something in the past ... what is standing in the way of our happiness? We could blame the other person, or ourselves, or our situation, or the thing in the past ... but actually, the thing preventing our happiness is being stuck on an ideal or expectation. We could let go of how we want others to be, how we want our lives to be, how we want ourselves to be ... and find contentment in the way things are. This is hard for people to accept — because they aren't good at letting go yet. Again, more below.
- **Weight loss:** Eat less, by slowly reducing portion sizes and eating more vegetables and beans (low in calories, high in bulk). This is a simple recipe for weight loss (I would add strength training and other exercise, but let's keep things simple), but what stands in our way of eating less? Wanting to eat pleasurable foods, junk foods, comfort foods, bigger portions. If we let go of these wants, we could eat less. Yes, it's possible (I've done it many times).

More on all of this in the sections below. But first, let's look at what letting go actually means.

The Process of Letting Go

What does it mean when I suggest that we let go? It means that we are attached to something (we all are, most of the time), and to let it go means to loosen that attachment.

It's opening up of our grip, and letting the cherry blossoms blow in the wind as they will, out of our grasp.

When you are angry at someone, you are unhappy with how they acted. You believe they should have acted some other way. The *should have acted* is what you're holding onto. If you didn't have the *should* so firmly attached in your mind, you wouldn't be angry.

So the answer is letting go of the should.

The answer is to loosen the tight grip on the way you think things should be. And let the should blow away in the wind. Because in reality, we have no control over the *should* of reality. We can't make other people act the way we'd like them to, because they're not puppets. We can't even make ourselves act the way we want, much of the time.

We don't control the *should*, and so letting go of our tight grasp of them, loosening up and learning to accept the uncontrollable nature of life, leads to many benefits. Let's look at some of them below.

Productivity & Letting Go

I've already given an example of how letting go of all that we want to do allows us to be more focused and effective, and accomplish more.

Let's look at a few more examples of how letting go improves productivity:

- If we pick just three things on our to-do list that are important, and let go of the rest (for now), we can focus on the important things.
- If we let go of needing to stay current on everything, that will allow us to be less distracted by news and social media and messages and emails. We can then just focus on what's important.
- If we let go of needing to say yes to every request, we will free up a lot of our time, and instead focus on what's most important.
- If we let go of our urges to be entertained and distracted, we'll free up time to focus on the important.

Attachments are getting in the way of our meaningful contributions to the world. Letting go is the answer.

Simplicity & Letting Go

This past week, I started decluttering different areas of my life. I had to let go of a lot of hopes and dreams, because the reality is, I am not going to have time to do everything. That means I can let go of books, hobby equipment, and all kinds of other clutter that represented my aspirations.

Holding on to how we think our lives *should* be ... stands in the way of simplicity. This attachment clutters our lives, both with physical clutter and with days filled with complexity.

Instead, we can let go of some of these aspirations, and focus on the ones that are truly meaningful.

The clutter is flowing out my door, as I practice letting go.

Finances & Letting Go

Recently Eva and I took a close look at our finances, and identified areas where we could trim down. It was a long-overdue look at our spending, after years of letting things creep higher and higher. I'm so happy we did it, but it meant letting go of things we have gotten used to. Ordering something as soon as we wanted it. Getting things for the house or the kids as soon as we decided we "needed" it.

Now, we're putting things on wishlists. And for my personal wishlist, I'm practicing changing the heading of that list from "wishlist" to "letting go of list". I visualize all of these fantasies I had of buying the "perfect" anything, and letting them go into the breeze. It's both frustrating and freeing.

Letting go isn't easy. But if we do, our finances can become so much healthier.

Happiness & Letting Go

A lot of times, I'll get frustrated with my kids. Or Eva. I'll find my chest tightening up, and have a very strong urge to tell them what to do. To control them. To make them act as I think they *should* act. Other people can be so frustrating!

But honestly, the problem isn't with them. They're all beautiful human beings, and my attachment to how they *should* act is getting in the way of me seeing that.

I'm missing out on their gorgeousness because I want them to be the way I think they should be. Instead of just seeing how awesome they already are!

So I have to let go of my shoulds. I have to let go of the source of my frustration, which is my ideals.

Instead, I can let go and open up to who they already are, and savor the deliciousness of that.

Weight Loss & Letting Go

I have a bit of a belly. Yes, I know, I'm a horrible person. The world should shame me for

having 20% bodyfat!

But seriously, I decided I need to tighten up my diet a bit, because I've gotten into the habit of eating a bit too much every meal, and over the long term, that leads to a chunkier Leo. Still lovable, still wonderful, still sexy ... but not good for my health.

So I've set myself a plan: a green protein smoothie for breakfast, and a set meal for lunch and dinner (half a sweet potato, lentils, edamame, hummus, leafy greens, roasted cauliflower and broccoli, some sriracha sauce drizzled on top, some pickled daikon radish, yum!). No sweets or flour. Only eat between 11:30am and 5:30 pm (I haven't implemented this last part yet).

Anyway, it's a simple plan, and it will absolutely work. Until my wife bakes vegan chocolate chip cookies, or the kids have vegan pizza. My two greatest nemeses.

It's hard dealing with the urge to eat these delicious comfort foods. I have to see the urge, and let go.

Loosen my grip on these tastes, and let them blow into the wind.

Letting go, I open myself up to enjoy the yumminess of the food I already planned to have. Weight loss is that simple, if you practice letting go.

Getting Good at Letting Go

So it's all easy and breezy, right? Not so fast. Letting go is the ultimate hack, but in truth, it's hard as hell.

We don't *want* to let go. You might already have had that reaction to some of the things I've written: "But I like my (insert the thing you're attached to here)! Why should I let go of it?"

Because of your attachment.

If you get in the habit of letting yourself hold on to all your attachments, you're going to develop many difficulties in life. Maybe you already are dealing with those difficulties. Practicing letting go is a way to greater happiness, health and focus.

So practice. In small doses, try noticing your attachment, and letting go of it, just for a few minutes.

Try letting go of your distractions and need to be updated for one hour. See what that's like.

Try letting go of your electronics for two hours. What can you open up to instead?

Try letting go of your usual comforts, for one day. What deliciousness can you experience instead?

Try letting go of the things you want to buy, for one week (no buying anything but necessities like soap and toilet paper). What is that like?

Practice letting go, just for a little bit. Every day.

This daily practice is how you master it. And that's mastering life.

Zen Productivity Workshop

Interested in working live with me, on Zen Productivity, simplicity or letting go? Let's do it!

I'm going to be coming to a city near you soon and doing a 2-day workshop.

Sign up for updates here, and I'll let you know soon!