

EPISODE 146**[INTRODUCTION]**

LW: Over the course of three and a half years, I finally got to a point where I had to make a deal with myself, saying that if I don't finish this book sooner rather than later, I'm never going to finish the book. I gave myself a very hard deadline of, I think it was a month out from me having this internal dialogue about I need to finish this book. Then I did something that I had never done before. I got out my checkbook, because this is back when we still use checks. I got out my checkbook and I wrote out a check for \$4,000. I endorsed it to a friend of mine who didn't need the money, but he also lived down the street from me and I need someone that I could trust.

I wrote out a contract between him and myself stating that I am agreeing to finish the manuscript for this book by such and such a date, which is a month away from me having this experience. If for whatever reason, doesn't matter the excuse, I do not finish the manuscript at that time, then my friend is obligated to take the check that I'm including in this contract and to deposit it, to spend it on anything that has nothing to do with me."

[0:01:18] LW: Hello friends and welcome back to the Light Watkins Show, where I interview ordinary folks just like you and me who have taken extraordinary leaps of faith in the direction of their path, their purpose, or what they've identified with as their mission. In doing so, they've been able to positively impact and inspire the lives of many others who've either heard about their story, or who've witnessed them in action, or who directly benefited from their work. Today, I have a solo episode for you.

The theme of this solo episode is Spiritual Minimalism, which is the topic of my upcoming book, *Travel Light: Spiritual Minimalism to Live a More Fulfilled Life*. I coined the term spiritual minimalism to make it distinct from conventional minimalism, which is how a lot of people see the act of getting rid of external clutter, becoming more minimal. Spiritual minimalism is really more about an inside-out approach to the practice of minimalism. Meaning, you're prioritizing your inner work. You're cultivating fulfillment and happiness inside. As a byproduct of becoming more fulfilled, you naturally feel less of a need to hold on to stuff, or to accumulate more stuff.

We're going to do a deep dive into spiritual minimalism. I'm going to be speaking about the seven principles of spiritual minimalism and how they all play a role in helping you live a more fulfilled, meaningful life. We'll be talking about the importance of listening to the voice of your inner guidance and living as though there are no throwaway moments. We're going to be talking about how you should be giving what you want to receive and the power of following your curiosity. We'll also talk about why you want to actively find comfort and discomfort and what it means to have the freedom of choicelessness.

I think you're going to find this episode very insightful and a good precursor to *Travel Light*. As always, if you have any specific subjects that you would like for me to explore in future solo episodes, please feel free to email them to me at lightwatkins.com. In the meantime, let us get into this episode. Again, thank you so much for taking your time to be a part of this podcast mission. I'm well aware that there are so many amazing shows that you could be listening to and I'm honored that you chose to spend your time with me here and now. Without further ado, let's get into the solo episode.

[EPISODE]

[0:03:55] LW: Hey, there. Today, I would love to talk to you all about something that I am very, very excited about, which is my next book. This is book number four, and it's coming out this summer. It's called *Travel Light*, pun intended. The subtitle is *Live a More Fulfilled Life Using the Principles of Spiritual Minimalism*. I've done episodes before about my journey into minimalism and how it works. I want to introduce you all today to this concept of spiritual minimalism. I also want to talk to you about the backstory of how this book came to be, because I know some of you out there have ideas for books. When I wrote my first book, I didn't have anybody guiding me through a process. I was just having to figure it out on my own. I always wish that I had someone who would give me this blueprint of how the whole thing works. Because I think everybody, or a lot of people have ideas that they think would make good books. You may wonder, why don't they have a book about this or that idea?

As it turns out, having an idea for a book, even if it's a great idea, is probably not going to get the book published. I published my first book by myself using Amazon's self-publishing platform, which at the time was called Create Space. It was a situation where you would basically write

your book and create a PDF file of your book. Then all you had to do was upload the PDF file, format it for the actual print book. Then Amazon would print that book out and mail it to you within a few days. It was like you already had a book from a publisher, except it was print on demand. It was very, very efficient. I think they still have something like that. I haven't really explored it, because I started working with publishers after that.

Even back in 2014, which was nearly 10 years ago, it was very possible to self-publish your own book through Amazon quite simply. The hardest part by far was writing the book and then formatting the book and editing the book and all of that good stuff. I imagine that it's even easier these days and probably, there are more platforms that can print your book on demand if you have an idea.

The reason why nowadays, when people tell me they have a great idea for a book, I recommend that they consider self-publishing the book is because it's very, very difficult to convince a publisher to publish your first book, unless you have a tried and true platform, or way of selling the book. That's really what the publishers are interested in, is how many eyeballs are on you right now willing to buy things that you have to sell. If you go through a publisher, you're going to probably need to get a book agent, a literary agent. Your literary agent is the liaison between you and the publisher. He or she has all the connections with the publishing houses, the Harper Collins and the Penguin Random Houses and the Hay Houses and the Sounds Trues and all of those major publishing houses.

That's essentially what you are hiring them for is to put your book idea in front of people who could actually publish it and then also, potentially give you an advance for writing the book, which means just a payment to go away and write the book. Once you have your book agent and book agents are hard to get as well, because they want to work with people also who have some platform, because they're going to have to spend time on the front end shopping your book proposal around and they know generally what publishers are going to buy and what they're going to pass on, because they've been in the business for so long. They know that publishers want to work with authors who have a platform.

Let's say, let's give you the benefit of the doubt and say you have a platform. Let's say, you have 10 or 20,000 followers on social media, or you have a YouTube channel, or you are in the public eye in some way and maybe you have a lot of articles that have been written about you

for positive things. Maybe even negative things. Maybe there's a market for that, I don't know. Or you're big on Twitter. Whatever your situation is, maybe you have a podcast, maybe you have a radio show, you have people listening to you, watching for you, waiting for you to create content. Then if you have that, you're going to lead with that when you go to seek out a book agent.

Once you secure a book agent, then the book agent is going to ask you, "Okay, what's your idea?" Now, you don't want to say, "Well, I want to write something about sourdough bread, or I want to write something about bridges." I think they'd be really interesting to have a book about bridges, or a book about tea and how tea originated. You have to come with a very, very specific idea, with a beginning, a middle and an end, because no one is going to envision your idea like you're going to envision your idea. They already have however many dozen other ideas swirling around in their head from other authors, so they really don't have the extra headspace to sit there and spitball ideas with you, especially if you have an unproven track record.

As a first-time author, you want to be very, very prepared. You want to have your idea. Ideally, the more unique your idea, the better. Because otherwise, they're going to say, "Oh, that's just like such and such book, or this book, or this book that came out last year, or this person I know is writing a book similar to that." You want something that is unique to you and that really is a book that only you can write. No one else can write that book other than you. That's the best possible idea for a book.

Then once a book agent says, "Okay. Well, that sounds like an interesting idea. Why don't you go and put together a proposal?" Then you go and you write your book proposal. Now the book proposal, as a first-time author, is going to be pretty weighty. It may be 60 pages. It may be 80 pages, it may even be a 100 pages, depending on the uniqueness of your book. All the book proposal is, is a loose outline of how your book is going to be, the beginning, the middle and the end, plus maybe a chapter or two of sample writing, so that the potential publisher can see how you construct your thoughts, how you organize your thoughts. If you have any special components to your book, such as exercises, or thought experiments, then you can put that in there as well, so the publisher can see how you want to engage with the reader.

You have an outline of your book, which is the table of contents, so that they can see what the through line of the book is. If there are sections of the book, how would you organize them in sections? Again, and this is as a first-time author, you're having to essentially prove that you know how to think like an author, like a book author. They want to see that before they're going to give you any contract deal, advance, or anything like that. That's only the first half of the proposal. Do you know what the second half of the proposal consists of? Take a guess. If the first half of the proposal is your book idea, what is the second half of the proposal? It's how you're going to sell the book. It's your marketing plan. The publisher wants to know all the ways that you anticipate selling the book, all the affiliations you have, all the connections you have, any celebrity relationships that you have. Anything that is going to help get more eyeballs on the book, they want to see all of it.

Even if it's a sorority, or fraternity you're affiliated with from college, or an association in your city, anything like that. If you have a podcast, they want to see that you have a podcast and then they want to know how many downloads does your podcast get and what is the growth trajectory of your podcast? Because they want to see where this podcast is potentially going to be once the book comes out in six or eight months or a year after you finish writing it. If you have certain platforms on social media, they want to see how many followers you have, what's the engagement like of your followers? How much has it grown over the last year? Because the big misconception that a lot of authors make is they think that being with a publisher means that the publisher is going to promote your book for you and that's not what happens. The publisher doesn't promote your book.

The publisher, in their mind, puts you in the best position to promote your own book. Rightfully so, they realized that no one's going to be able to promote the book as enthusiastically as you are. They obviously are biased, plus they have a bunch of other publishers that they're working with, so they're spread pretty thin usually and they're not able to give every author that they have the same amount of attention that they would like to, because all their resources are being used for putting out dozens and dozens of books each year. Really at the end of the day, you are solely responsible for promoting your own book, and that includes getting a PR service. If you need public relations, you need to make that clear in your book proposal. If you need illustrations in your book, you need to make that clear in your book proposal.

Anything you want to do to accentuate your book, or to put yourself in an advantage when it comes to the promotion aspect of the book, you list all of that in the second half of your book and how it's going to go. It's basically like a business plan and a marketing plan for the book that you're writing.

Once you have a tight and thorough proposal, and you'll go back and forth with your literary agent a few times to get this together, then your agent will shop your proposal around to the publishing houses, to their context. What they're looking for is to find an editor at that publishing house who falls in love with your idea and your marketing plan. Once that happens, that editor will then take your idea to their selection committee and they will review the idea and they'll review it against all the other books they have out. Does this fit in our genre? Does this fit in our stable of books? Do we feel like we can get this thing done in a certain amount of time? What would potential events look like, and can we afford that in our budget for the year?

All of these various considerations get made with that selection committee. If your book makes it through the filtering process, then your editor, or the publishing house will say, "Yes, we're interested in bidding on the book." Then, there's a day that comes where if there are multiple people who are interested in the book, the literary agent will host an auction to see who would like to give you the best advance to write your book.

All the publisher houses that have indicated an interest in your book will submit a number, which is the advance that they are willing to pay for you to write that book, for the exclusive contract to distribute your book. Let's say, you have three publishing houses that are all interested in your book, then one publishing house may bid \$10,000 for you as an advance. Another publishing house may bid \$20,000 and another one may bid \$25,000. Those are all relatively expected advances for a first-time author with the modest size platform, right. \$10,000, \$15,000, or \$20,000, maybe \$25,000 at the most.

Your agent will take those numbers back to you and he, or she will present the whole thing to you and say, this publishing house wants to give you \$20,000, this one wants to give you \$25,000, this one is offering \$10,000. Which one would you like to go with? You as the author will then weigh all of the information and the relationships that you've already established, because you've already had interviews with all of these publishing houses. You've talked to the teams who would be working with you on the book. You've been able to gauge their excitement

about the book and all the ideas that they have and what they would like to do for the book, or with the book and you get to decide. Is the most important thing, the highest offer, or it's the most important thing, feeling a symmetry with the team, or it's the most important thing, some other aspect of whatever you discuss with those individual publishing houses?

Once you make your decision, and most authors typically go with the highest offer, because that's just the easiest way to decide how badly somebody wants to work with you. Once you select which book you want to go with and which publishing house you want to go with, then they will send you a contract and then you will agree on a certain deadline to write the book. Now, let's say you went with the \$25,000 offer, okay. They're not going to give you \$25,000 off the bat to go write the book. What they'll do is they'll split the payment up in maybe three parts. You'll get \$10,000 upon signing the contract and you'll get another \$10,000 once you turn the manuscript in to their satisfaction and you hit all the specifications and you'll get another \$5,000 once the book comes out.

The books typically won't come out for six months to maybe a year after you turn the book in. It may take you six months to write the book. All in all, the book probably won't hit the shelves until about a year and a half after you sign the contract and begin the writing process, okay. That \$25,000 is not enough to live off of in most places in America, but it is enough to devote some meaningful amount of time to the writing process.

When it comes to things like royalties, you are eligible for royalties once you pay off that \$25,000 advance. In other words, if your book is on sale for say \$20, you may get \$2 of every book going towards your advance, which means that you would have to sell 20 or 30,000 copies. I didn't do the math here. I'm just making this up. But you'd have to sell 20 or 30,000 copies to pay off the advance in accordance with the publisher's accounting. They'll give you that number, whatever it is. It's always going to be more than you probably think. But once you pay that number off, then you'll start getting usually around 12% or 15% royalties on every book sold. That \$2 will start coming to you instead of going back to the publishing house, okay.

Again, it really only happens if your book becomes a best seller. Most books that get published only sell maybe a few hundred copies, maybe several hundred copies. They rarely break a thousand copies. If your book sells in the thousands, then that is a good indicator that you can potentially, at some point, start earning royalties on your book. Usually, it's authors who have

New York Times best-selling books and things like that that end up making royalties off their books. Most people don't make a living from writing their book.

Then you go off, you write your book and you turn it in at some point, maybe six months later, maybe eight months later. You are working with the editor from the publishing house the entire time. Then once you turn it in, you have to go through some final edits. They'll send you some final edits, as they have their people look at the book and do copyediting and substantive editing, where they're looking at just the organization of the whole thing. Once everything gets approved over the course of those next several months, the book goes to print. Then you go and maybe record the audio book for it, and then you start working on the marketing plan. You have to start marketing the book several months before the book comes out. Then the book comes out, you do a book launch, you do podcasts, etc., etc. Your book is on the market. You're just out there talking about the book as much as possible.

With *Travel Light*, that is exactly how the process worked for me. The book that I have coming out now is my fourth book. As I mentioned, my first book, which is called *The Inner Gym*, was a self-published book. Then my second book was my first book working with a publisher. The Publisher is Random House. Penguin Random House published *Bliss More: How to Succeed in Meditation Without Really Trying*. That was my first time working with a publisher and really understanding this whole process and seeing it all happen.

Then my next book, after that, the third book, I moved to a different publisher, because a different publisher submitted the highest bid for that project, which is a book that was based on my daily dose of inspiration emails called *Knowing Where to Look*. That one came out in 2021, in the summer of 2021. As soon as that one came out and I did the initial wave of marketing and all of that, then I floated the idea of doing the next book, which is *Travel Light*. What was happening in between *Travel Light* getting a deal and me thinking of that as a book was I've been traveling as a nomad since May of 2018.

Some of you are familiar with that story, because I've been talking about it for years now, but I sold off everything in May of 2018, everything that did not fit into my carry-on bag. At the time, I was living in Santa Monica, California, and I've been traveling pretty much on a bi-monthly basis. I was out of town maybe two to three weeks out of the month. I was essentially living out of a carry-on bag, but without getting rid of anything else. This was an opportunity to be really

intentional about it and to get rid of the apartment, the car, the Vespa, the other car, and all of the stuff that I had accumulated over those few decades of living a very comfortable life in a very nice apartment, in a beautiful part of Los Angeles, and truncating all of that into this carry-on bag, which would effectively become my new apartment.

Once I started having that experience and I saw how unique it was in comparison to what other people were doing, I initially started thinking to myself, "Oh, maybe one day this could be a book." Because that's what starts happening. Once you start writing books, you start thinking in books. It's just like, if someone is a film director and they have an experience, they may think, "Oh, wow. This will make a really good movie." Or if someone is a choreographer and they go through something, they may think, "Oh, this will make a great inspiration for choreography," or painter, or musician, or whatever the creative expression is. Once you do it enough times, you start thinking in those terms. The idea of writing a book, or choreographing a dance, or creating a film, if you've already done it once, twice or three times, is not that intimidating.

Whereas, if you've never done it, then it's like this huge thing. You don't know how it's going to happen and it's overwhelming and you find yourself delaying and procrastinating. That's what I did with my very first book, *The Inner Gym*. I postponed for about three and a half years. I would go into it here and there and then I would take two months off. Then I'd come back to it and be really dedicated for a few weeks and then take another month off and then come back to it like that, read what I wrote and then not like any of it and start over, and then come back to it.

Over the course of three and a half years, I finally got to a point where I had to make a deal with myself, saying that if I don't finish this book sooner rather than later, I'm never going to finish the book. I gave myself a very hard deadline of, I think, it was a month out from me having this internal dialogue about I need to finish this book. Then I did something that I had never done before. I got out my checkbook, because this is back when we still use checks. I got out my checkbook and I wrote out a check for \$4,000. Now, if I were to look at my bank account at the time, I probably would have had, I don't know, \$10,000, or something, or maybe \$6,000, which was a lot of money at the time.

\$4,000 would have been a significant hit to my bank account. I wrote out the check for \$4,000 and I endorsed it to a friend of mine who didn't need the money, but he also lived down the street from me and I need someone that I could trust. I wrote out a contract between him and

myself stating that I am agreeing to finish the manuscript for this book by such and such a date, which was a month away from me having this experience. If for whatever reason, it doesn't matter if the excuse, I do not finish the manuscript at that time, then my friend is obligated to take the check that I'm including in this contract and to deposit it, and to spend it on anything that has nothing to do with me, okay?

He can't donate to a charity that I like in my name, or anything like that. He has to spend it on something involving himself. That was the deal I made with myself. Then I reached out to my friend and I told him what I was wanting to do. I said, "Look, you're never going to have to worry about being in some weird position with this check, because it's not going to happen because I'm going to finish the book before the deadline." I gave him the contract and I gave him the check. Sure enough, all of the discipline that I didn't have before, I all of a sudden found. All the time I didn't have before, I all of a sudden found, because I had something of great value to me, relative to me at that time that was on the line and that I could not afford to lose and it was out of my hands.

There's no way I could get the check back, or convince him to tear it up, or anything like that, because I already put in the contract that under no circumstances we'd see not to cash that check. That was how I finished my first book. Then a couple months later, I've got the book in my hands and then did a little book launch. People thought that I had a publisher, because of how professionally everything was being orchestrated. It was just me trying to figure out what a published book actually looked like.

I remember, in fact, one little tip I'll give you guys that I didn't realize until just before I got my book self-published, the first one, is when you write something, typically your byline is By Light Watkins. *The Inner Gym* by Light Watkins. If you look at published books, none of them have the word by in there. It just has the title of the book, the subtitle, and then the name of the author. *The Inner Gym: A 30-Day Workout for Strengthening Happiness*, Light Watkins. It doesn't say by Light Watkins. If someone has by whatever their name is, John Smith, Mary Sue, on their title of the book, that's a self-published book. You can tell right off the bat, that's a self-published book.

There are a lot of little things like that, getting a USB on the back cover of your book and other things. There's something about the title. When you have a title of the book and you're

wondering what the title of the book, the instinct is to title the book whatever the book does. *How to Succeed in Meditation Without Really Trying*. What publishers do in the publishing industry, if they title the book by the benefit of the book, what are you going to get from the book. In other words, *Bliss More*, so more bliss. Then the subtitle was *How to Succeed in Meditation Without Really Trying*. My original idea for the book was *How to Succeed In Meditation Without Really Trying*. They said, "No, that's a better subtitle. But the title of the book should be the benefits that the book provides."

I didn't know any of this beforehand. But obviously, nowadays there's a lot of research, there are a lot of YouTube videos and whatnot to learn all these little subtleties of the publishing process. Once you get them down, you can publish something that actually looks like it was published by an actual publisher. Think about *Travel Light*, travel light means you have an opportunity to travel light. Then the subtitle is *Live a More Fulfilled Life Using the Principles of Spiritual Minimalism*. I had that idea after a year or two of living on the road, and then my previous book came out. One of the experiences that happened during that book is when I was working with my editor for *Knowing Where to Look*, and *Knowing Where to Look* is the book of a 108 doses of inspiration from my emails, my daily dose of inspiration email that I've been sending out for many years.

The editor of that book read some of my stories related to minimalism and traveling. Then she said, she felt inspired to start traveling light. In other words, she got rid of her apartment, she moved into an RV with her boyfriend, and then they started traveling and living out of the RV. That was a very inspiring experience, because you don't realize the weight of your life experiences, until other people start to emulate them. You're like, "Wow, that's really interesting. That thing that I wrote, inspired somebody to do something like that, something extreme like that." I knew that the idea had legs, and the next part was just getting someone who also knew that it was a good idea to advocate for it. That's what my editor of *Knowing Where to Look* did for me.

I told her about the idea. She was very excited about it. Then I put together another proposal for it, so that she could pitch it to her team at Sounds True, which is my publisher. Sure enough, they decided that it was a good idea as well. We did the full proposal. They have a first right of refusal as well, which means that once you work with a publisher, they obviously would love to have a long-term relationship with publishers that they really believe in. Part of the contract is, if

you have an idea for another book while you're working on this book, then we have the right to look at it first and either accept it and give you a fair price for it, or to reject it, and then you can go shop around in the open market.

They ended up accepting the deal for *Travel Light*, gave me my advance, and then I started putting it together. *Travel Light* was going to be my take on the practice of minimalism. Now, on the surface, on paper, it looks like I am very much a minimalist. I don't own a lot of things. At this point, I live from a backpack, not even a carry-on bag, because I scaled down from there. I am very self-sufficient in that way. I can hand wash my own clothes. I recycle a lot of things that I use. If they break down, I don't get new ones. I fix the ones that I have and these kinds of things. I didn't want to write just another minimalism book, because what I realized was that my unique approach to the practice of minimalism was very much informed by my background as a meditation teacher and as a practitioner of meditation.

Because when I look at the mechanics of me going on the road and getting rid of everything and traveling to where I was traveling to while I was writing and speaking and teaching and doing all these things, the basis for making all of those choices was really my internal guidance, my internal guidance. People ask me all the time now, why did you choose to go minimalism? What was your inspiration? It was really my internal guidance that directed me towards that path. I never saw that coming, even years before that, or a couple of years before that, I'd never imagined that I would be living from a backpack, or a carry-on bag with everything that I literally wear fitting into that bag. That's the same guidance that I talked about when I wrote *Knowing Where to Look*, about the time when I met my meditation teacher in 2003 in Los Angeles. I knew instantly that he was meant to be my meditation teacher and that I was meant to teach meditation.

At the time, again, this is 2003, so there were no apps, there was no social media. The Internet was only maybe eight or nine-years-old in the way that we know it today. There was no clear path to becoming a meditation teacher. My inner guidance was very clear in the feeling tone of, "Oh, that's for you. That's meant for you. Keep paying attention to anything related to that." Then sure enough, many years later, there was an opportunity to go off and study to become a meditation teacher, which I enthusiastically did. Then I came back a few months later and I started working full-time as a meditation teacher and more specifically as a Vedic meditation

teacher, which is something that I still do today. I still look back now and recognize it as my calling, or as my passion.

Becoming nomadic was the same deal. The inner guidance was the thing that initiated it. Once I got the download that this is what I'm supposed to do, there wasn't really a whole lot of back and forth like, "Oh, I don't know if I want to do it. Oh, it's so inconvenient. Oh, it's going to be expensive. Oh, it's going to be this. Oh, it's going to be that." All I was thinking of at that point was, how is it going to happen? How can I let this happen? Again, I had just written my meditation book and my meditation book had just come out in January of that year, of 2018. A deal came together between me and this festival company called Wanderlust. They had booked me to appear and lead meditations at 12, or maybe it was 18 of their upcoming festivals over that next year, which they were going to be paying for me to travel to those festivals and putting me up in hotels and whatnot.

I had engagements all over the country. I thought, okay, this is a perfect time to try the minimalism thing out, because I'm already going to be on the road quite a bit over these next several months. I've got all these engagements and I'm being paid to go to these places. Let's go for it. Everything came together without planning it. I could have never planned to collaborate with Wanderlust prior to that, because there was no strong relationship in that regard. I went with it and I started traveling around from my carry-on bag.

I realized that I had way too much stuff. See, I had brought seven shirts, seven pairs of underwear, four or five pairs of pants and all these things in anticipation of getting to a point where I needed to wash clothes. I didn't want to have to wash clothes every two or three days. It wasn't until about a year into it that I realized that, hey, I could actually start hand washing my clothes. On occasion, when I have access to a dryer, and a washer, then I'll wash the clothes and the wash and dryer. But in the meantime, I can just hand wash my clothes. Then that way, I could cut down on my wardrobe. I only needed a few shirts. I only needed a couple of pairs of underwear, because I could hand wash them almost every few nights. I did that and that was a big leap of faith, getting rid of half my wardrobe. As it turned out, it allowed me to actually carry less and to then do more with less. Those two things became principles of the spiritual minimalism.

Spiritual minimalism essentially means minimalism from the inside-out, okay? It starts with creating a relationship with your inner guidance. This is a very important step, because what that means is that, let's say you wake up tomorrow morning and you decide, "Okay, I want to be a minimalist." How you approach minimalism could be drastically different from how somebody who wrote a book on minimalism approaches minimalism. On the surface, it may seem like you're doing it wrong, because it's not matching up with whatever the best practices are as outlined by this other author who's famous for living a minimalist life.

Your intuition is telling you, no, you have to do it this way, because this is the thing that you need for this season of your life and for your karma and for your spiritual sacred contracts and etc. In other words, you need to have certain experiences that are going to prepare you to be able to let go of the things that have been making you feel like you needed more things than you actually do. That may not be a material item. It may not be a blender, or a pair of shoes, or a purse, or something that you've been holding on to in your closet. It could be something like a relationship. Say, you're holding on to a toxic relationship, or say you're holding on to a job that is no longer lighting you up inside in the way that it used to. Maybe you even cry while going to work every day, because of how much you don't anticipate being there.

Or let's say, you're holding on to a belief system that is no longer serving you, or you're holding on to a body type that is no longer serving you. In the back of your mind, or in your heart, you're thinking, "I could be in a much better shape than I'm in right now." You have all these excuses around why that's not the case, that don't really add up when you really think about them objectively. Those could be a lot of the reasons why, or at least symptoms of the reasons why we find ourselves acquiring a lot more than we actually use, or that we actually need, because they become our comfort, our ways of escaping, facing what's really going on, because we can lose ourselves, or distract ourselves in the drama of a toxic relationship, or we can distract ourselves in retail therapy and/or we can distract ourselves in complaining about some job, or some friendship that's not serving us, in that way, we never have to look at how I'm responsible for any of this.

Establishing that connection with your inner guidance is key to becoming more and more self-aware. Then once you start to have that connection, that's when you start to follow the voice of inner guidance. It's one thing to hear the voice of your inner guidance, it's another thing to follow the voice of your inner guidance, because that voice may appear to be taking you through a

labyrinth of experiences in order to get to the thing that you think you ultimately want, but it doesn't look like that's where things are going. If you say, "I want to have a million dollars," and let's give you the benefit of the doubt. Let's say, you want to have a million dollars so you can start a charity to help a lot of people. Beautiful. Okay.

But your inner guidance tells you that the first step to getting that million dollars is to get in better shape, to go to the gym. You may be thinking, "Well, I don't care about how I look and I just need the million dollars, so I can start this thing." But everything in your body is saying, go to the gym, get in shape. Let's say, you give it the benefit of the doubt, you go to the gym and it takes you six months to get into shape. While you're there in the gym, one day on the treadmill, you're going through your little routine and then someone comes onto the treadmill next to you and their treadmill isn't working for some reason, or they can't figure out how to make it work. And so, you being the good Samaritan that you are, you take your headphones out and you say, "Oh, you just need to do X, Y and Z. That's how you start it." That person says, "Oh, thank you so much. I really appreciate it." You both have your treadmill experiences.

Then as you're leaving the gym, you bump into that person in the parking lot and they thank you again and you strike up this conversation. Come to find out, this person is the head of grant writing for non-profits. You have been struggling to write a grant to get this million-dollars. They say, "Oh you helped me out. Let me help you out. Just give me a call, I'll tell you exactly what to put in the grant and it should get approved no problem." That relationship turns into a three-week, or two-month long mentorship, in which case you end up getting the million dollars in the least expected way, because you're at the gym, getting yourself in shape, okay. You never could have imagined that. You never could have fathomed that, but that's the power of taking action on your inner guidance.

The thing with inner guidance that I talk about in the book as it relates to spiritual minimalism is that it's never going to prompt you to move in the direction that's going to make you more comfortable. If anything, it's going to prompt you to move in the direction that makes you less comfortable. Going to the gym, when you rather sit on the couch is the less comfortable option, but it's better for you, it's better for everyone that you care about that you're healthy and happy. Ultimately, it's better for your mission, for your path and your purpose, because what the universe is doing through your inner guidance is it's placing you constantly in proximity to the

things that are like the Lego pieces of your mission. They all come together as you follow through on that action.

That's why listening to and following your inner guidance is a part of minimalism, because you're able to do less and accomplish more. You're able to just do your thing, live your life, go in your routine, and you're getting all of the other things that you've always envisioned and dreamed about done, without having to try to force anything. Another principle of spiritual minimalism that I write about in the upcoming book is this idea that there are no throw away moments. That ties into what we just talked about, which is the idea that being on the treadmill is not just being on the treadmill. It's not a throw away moment. The person coming up next to you is not a throw away moment. You standing in line at the grocery store is not a throw away moment.

All of these are potential opportunities for growth, for expansion, for presence, at the very, very least to express gratitude for where you are and for what you have. All that does is it gets you rooted even more so in that present moment. It's from being rooted in the present moment that you're able to see connections between things that maybe you would have missed otherwise. You're able to see patterns. You're able to see and experience genuine connections between people, striking up a conversation with the person in the elevator, striking up a conversation with the person behind you in line, helping someone out in the way that you did in that imaginary treadmill scenario. All of these things are helping you stay on your path and on your purpose.

All you have to do, and this is the best part about it, all you have to do is be yourself. That's all you have to do. Be yourself. When you find yourself getting caught up in whatever's going to happen in the future, or what hasn't happened in the future, or getting caught up in regret around what happened in the past, to bring yourself back to that present moment, all you have to do is come back to some degree of gratitude for where you are and for whatever you're experiencing. Then you'll be rooted in the present moment again, and you'll be able to see more things.

I kind of liking it to those magic eye puzzles, where it has the distorted configurations. If you stare at it for long enough, some shape, or some message will start to appear before your eyes. It will come out of the distortion and into clear focus. That's what that means when you're present to what appears to be randomness, or chaos, and you just rooted in that present

moment and you're grateful, then things that you didn't see otherwise would start to come more and more into focus.

That leads us to the next part of spiritual minimalism, which is giving what you want to receive. Giving what you want to receive. In the case of going back to the gym example, you were on the treadmill, person next to you is struggling. You've probably been in that situation as well. Maybe your first time on the treadmill, you were struggling. You didn't know how it worked. What did you want more than anything at that moment? Someone that could help you in a way that didn't make you feel stupid. You end up giving that as a service to the person who was struggling on the treadmill. Then what ended up happening was that that person ended up giving you what they didn't even know that you wanted, but it's something that they had that could help you out quite a bit, which was to help you learn how to write the grant for the million dollars to fund the non-profit.

That's how the universe works. We can look at all of this like, it's all just random. Einstein said, there are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle, and the other is as though everything is a miracle. That's what a spiritual minimalist does, is they adopt the mindset that everything is a little tiny miracle. It's not random that this person who could help you out is on the treadmill and/or you're able to help them out in whatever way you're able to help them out. Everybody's just being themselves. That's the great part about it is that you don't have to try to do anything other than you normally already are doing, because that's how the whole thing works.

If everything's a miracle, then that means that nothing is not a miracle. Just having that understanding, again, is a way to drop ourselves into the present moment, in the things that are uncomfortable or happening around us. We can remember that, oh, this is also a miracle. Whatever I'm experiencing right now is also a miracle. Then it opens our eyes up to those clues and the gifts that are available for us in that moment, that we may not realize how we're going to exactly use it in that moment. But if we continue on, keep the camera rolling, as my friend Tim Brown says, eventually, how it will be used will all come together. It's like that movie Castaway with Tom Hanks, where it's a silly premise, but this FedEx delivery person was in a plane crash and stranded on an island for several years, I believe. He had this package that he didn't want to open, because the package was a FedEx package and he wanted to be able to live long enough to be able to deliver that package to whoever the recipient was.

That ended up happening at the end. There were some spoofs that were made on that whole premise of a package. One of the spoofs on YouTube was that when at the end of the movie, they finally opened the package, there was a knife – there's a whole survival kit in the package. All the things that he could have used while he was stuck on the island, right? That's what the universe does is if there is something that happens to us and we're present enough to whatever is going on around us while we're going through that, oftentimes there is a survival tool that we can use to help us get to the next place along that path. Then eventually, we will use all of the experiences that we gather during that hardship to help someone else on their path.

The whole thing is just one big give and take of what it is that we want to experience. There's nothing that we can do to screw it up, except for not be present. This is why in the book, when it comes to spiritual minimalism, I talk about abstaining from alcohol. I'm not saying you have to become sober for the rest of your life. I'm also talking to people who have the occasional drink of alcohol. Maybe once a week, or once a month, or something like that. What I'm saying is that you want to test your sobriety, because a lot of people – a lot more people are functional alcoholics than they realize. The way you can test this out is you can go three months without alcohol. Three months. Three months is about the amount of time that you need to forge a habit, of consistency, of daily practice.

The practice that you're doing on a daily basis with not drinking alcohol is the practice of sobriety. If you can get through three months, then you know, "Okay, I'm not a functional alcoholic." If you can't get through three months, then you know that you may be a low-grade functional alcoholic, in which case you really need to go at least three months without drinking alcohol. The reason why is not because it makes you a better person, but you stop watering down your connection with your inner guidance, because your inner guidance is the most important thing for you when it comes to your path and your purpose.

If you can't hear it, then you're not going to be able to follow it. If you can't follow it, then you're going to have to be forced to get all of your cues about what to do next externally as opposed to internally, in which case, you're taking cues from people and from things who may not also be following their inner guidance. That's how we end up making our lives more complicated and chaotic than they would be otherwise.

If you can abstain from alcohol and other recreational substances that could be diminishing your connection, or dimming your consciousness, then you put yourself in the best possible position to hear whatever it is that your inner guidance is telling you to do. Because again, it's going to take you out of the direction of your comfort zone. Then once you start hearing it, another principle of spiritual minimalism is you want to start following your curiosity.

You don't have to find your life purpose. If you follow your curiosity, your life purpose will find you. Using the same example of the treadmill scenario, let's say you have an idea to play video games, which is something that some people may shame in our society. You shouldn't be sitting down playing video games, when you could be outside getting sun and blah, blah, blah. But let's say, say you're obsessed with video games for whatever reason. You just love video games and you love these specific kinds of video games that allows you to play with other people. You get really good at it and you start to form relationships with these people you're playing with and connections. Then you all start to help each other out in certain ways. Then eventually, somebody else has an idea, "Hey, I wish somebody added this component to the video game, so that we could start playing with these other group of people that don't normally have access to this."

Let's say that your father is a software engineer, or your son knows TikTok really well. You talk to them about the idea, they take it and run with it. Then together, you all end up many months, or years later with some foundation where you're helping kids with terminal illness play video games and have a little bit of joy and excitement in the last weeks, or months of their life. It all happened because these ideas that you heard sounded good enough to you to mention them to other people and for you to explore your own curiosity through those ideas. Now you're at a point where you're able to implement those ideas in a way that helps you serve other people.

This is also something that is happening, whether we realize it or not. We're curious about certain things, but we have a tendency to shame ourselves, because it doesn't make a lot of logical sense. It doesn't make us more money, or we're not going to get any recognition from it, or it seems like a waste of time. I told a story in my last book in *Knowing Where to Look*, about how I was in New York City teaching meditation as I would do every month for several years. I'd fly to New York, so I'd stay in some Airbnb, or usually I stay at a friend's house or something. I wouldn't finish up until sometimes 9 or 10.00 at night.

One night, it's about 10.30 and I'm walking back through Union Square, which is in the middle of Manhattan. Anyone who's familiar with that area knows there's a massive Barnes and Noble bookstore at the north end of Union Square. I used to go to that bookstore all the time when I lived in New York. Something told me as I was walking across Union Square, going to the subway so I could go home and go to bed and wake up the next morning and start all over teaching people meditation, something said "Light, go to Barnes and Noble and get a Rubik's Cube and learn how to solve the Rubik's Cube." Really, just out of nowhere. It just occurred to me. Go to Barnes and Noble, get a Rubik's Cube, learn how to solve the Rubik's Cube.

I go to Barnes and Noble and they're closing up. I go up to the second floor where they have the little toy section. Sure enough, they have one Rubik's Cube left. I got the Rubik's Cube, paid for it, got back home. Now it's 11.15, 11.30 at night, I'm lying in bed and I'm looking at the Rubik's Cube and I'm wondering how you solve it. I went online and I figured out that there's an algorithm to solving the Rubik's Cube, which means you don't have to be a genius in order to solve a Rubik's Cube. You just have to learn the algorithm.

You turn it a certain way and then turn it another way and you keep doing this combination of turns and eventually, the Rubik's Cube will solve itself. This is how these guys do it blindfolded, if you've ever seen any of those videos where they're solving the cube in 5 seconds blindfolded. It's because they've memorized the algorithm and they've practiced it enough times that doing those series of combinations becomes second nature. I was going through that, learning, learning, learning and eventually, I talked to a friend of mine on the phone who I talked to all the time and I told him what I was doing and he's like, "Man, why are you wasting your time on a Rubik's Cube? You could be doing X, Y, Z." To him, it was just a big waste of time.

To me, I didn't know why I was doing it. I just was curious about doing it and something told me to do it. Finally, after a few days, I learned how to solve the Rubik's Cube and it's the most amazing thing. When you're in New York, you're obviously taking the subway on occasion. One of the coolest experiences is solving a Rubik's Cube on the subway, because most people associate someone who can solve a Rubik's Cube as being a genius. They don't realize this algorithm. When they watch you solve it within the span of a minute, everyone is completely blown away. You can see eyes looking at you all over the subway. It's so cool.

Now I'm hooked on the reaction that I'm getting and I'm taking the Rubik's Cube around with me everywhere I go, and I'm solving the Rubik's Cube as a party trick. People are oohing and ahing and they just can't believe that I'm solving the Rubik's Cube. Anyways, cut to many months later, I'm back in Los Angeles where I live, I'm still solving the cube. Now, I'm bringing it out in meditation talks. I'm getting better and better at solving it. It occurs to me to make a video about solving the Rubik's Cube, because what I realized was that the way you solve a Rubik's Cube also coincides with the way meditation works. I won't get into it in this talk, because I've talked about this before. I did this video, I shot a video with my little point shoot camera and I labeled it and everything and I put music to it and it was a little two and a half minute video comparing the Rubik's Cube to meditation. Posted it on my YouTube channel and it went viral and people started sharing it. The whole meditation community was buzzing about it.

I started teaching more people meditation who would see that video and then look me up and then come in to learn how to meditate. What I didn't know at the time was that that inner voice saying go and get the Rubik's Cube was really saying, I want to bring more people to learn how to meditate with you, because you're doing such good things in the world and I want to support your mission. But all I heard was go get a Rubik's Cube and learn how to solve it, which again, made no sense to me, took me out of my comfort zone, blah, blah, blah.

That brings us to the next principle of spiritual minimalism. Again, this is minimalism from the inside out. I'm doing less and I'm accomplishing more. I'm living my life normally. I'm not having to get rid of anything. I'm not having to purge anything. All of that may happen as a consequence of me living my purpose. I may have less and less attraction, or desire to things that are not serving it, but it's not something that I'm forcing from the outside to the inside. The next principle is about getting comfortable with discomfort.

In this Rubik's Cube example, when your friend is trying to basically talk you out of doing something, because it doesn't match up with their logic, then it's going to be very uncomfortable to continue committing to this thing that doesn't make a lot of sense to other people. That's something that we all have to eventually go through if we're going to live a life of purpose. You have to get comfortable with discomfort. That was also a part of my nomadic journey, selling all my stuff. It's not that you have to sell your stuff to have the experience of getting comfortable with discomfort, but you have to find your version of that. What's your version of getting rid of everything and going on the road?

For instance, recently I went through a breakup and it was a very tough experience for me. Naturally, having gone through this several times in my life, I know it's not the end of the world. It's like being in between jobs. You'll get another situation going at some point. But you always want to find ways to help you move closer in the direction of your potential. One way that occurred to me that I promise you, I didn't intentionally think about this was to stop drinking coffee. Something just said, stop drinking coffee. That's going to be your exchange for your next relationship. You have to give something to get something.

Now, coffee is something that I enjoy doing, I don't necessarily consider myself to be a coffee addict. I've gone stretches of time without coffee. I really enjoy going to this particular cafe where I live in Mexico City, twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening, and enjoying a little flat white, or cappuccino, or something like that. I said to myself, "Okay, I'll get rid of the coffee." This was a few weeks ago. I haven't had a coffee ever since and I've changed my whole routine around going to the cafe. Now I'm making tea that goes in my thermos and I'm walking around with my tea thermos and drinking that. Look, it's just a different way of doing things.

Do I miss going to get the coffee? Yeah, a little bit. I miss it a little bit. I understand how these principles work now. I'm not back in a relationship yet, because I'm still going through my own healing, but it looks like things are moving in a good direction. Let's just put it that way. You don't want to wait on life to make you uncomfortable. You want to prompt this yourself, so that when life does eventually make you uncomfortable by having you navigate a breakup, or getting laid off, or having to move, or something like that, for you, it's not this big – it's not a huge interruption in the way that it would be for other people. For you, it's just a normal, uncomfortable situation and a series of uncomfortable situations. But that's what life is.

The more we can stay ourselves and be centered and be authentic throughout these uncomfortable conversations, the more we stay present, which means the more access we have to the best possible solutions that are available to us in that moment. That's, again, the gold, or the gift of that situation.

Then finally, the principle of embracing the freedom of choicelessness. Embracing the freedom of choicelessness. What do I mean by freedom of choicelessness? When I was scaling from a

carry-on bag down to a backpack, on the surface, it looked like I was forcing myself to just live with less and less and less, right? Really, what was happening was I was asking myself the wrong question. Instead of saying how much stuff can I fit into my carry-on bag, I should have been asking, how much stuff do I really need? How much stuff am I really going to use on a daily basis? Once you start asking those kinds of questions that are getting to the essence of whatever it is that you're wanting to do, then you're going to find that you can do a lot more with a lot less.

The whole path of the spiritual minimalist is to learn how to apply multiple functionality to everything that you have and everything that you do. How can you help the most people with what you're doing at your job, or with your hobby, or in your past time? How can you find rest throughout your day, right? There's obviously, your sleeping experience that gives you rest, but what if you could learn a meditation practice that could give you additional rest? You can do that two to three times throughout the day. What if you could go up onto your rooftop and get some sun during the day? That would be like going to the beach and laying out in the sun, so you'd have a little mini vacation, but you don't have to go anywhere except for up to the rooftop.

Again, looking around your area, looking around your home and finding new ways to do more with less. If you don't have all of the conveniences and all of the resources, I'm not seeing that as a bad thing, but instead, seeing that as the perfect thing to help you explore all of the other things that you wanted to explore with what you have available now. That's a sense of freedom that you enjoy from the restriction. You get freedom from the restriction. You get freedom from the choicelessness.

Now when I'm out and about here in my hometown of Mexico City and I go to a shopping center, I can't buy anything, because it's not going to fit in my backpack. When I ultimately leave this place, which I will one day, I can't buy things that aren't going to fit in my backpack. I have a freedom of choicelessness. I don't have to go back and forth in my head going, "Oh, should I get this? Should I get that? What about this? What about that? Why me? Oh, oh. Why? Why? Why?" Right? There's a clear restriction. There's a size that I have to fit everything into. If I can't fit into that, then I don't get it and I'm okay not getting it. I'm very okay with it, because it is what it is.

Following my initial curiosity to adopt this lifestyle has taught me that everything that I need will fit into that bag. If it doesn't fit into the bag, then that means that I don't need it for whatever reason, not at this point in my life. That's the gist of the spiritual minimalist approach that I'm going to be talking about more and more on my socials and I'll be writing about it in my newsletters and talking about it more in these solo episodes leading up to the release of this book, *Travel Light*, which is coming out in July of 2023. It's super exciting, because I get to add another layer to the more established minimalism conversation. Again, this is something that really only I can write about as a long-term meditation teacher, as a long-term meditation practitioner, as a black man from the south, from Alabama, who's had all of those experiences and someone who went to an HBCU and someone who worked in advertising for a little while and someone who worked in the fashion industry.

It's drawing upon all of my life experiences in order to express this message in the most authentic way. Where is that going to go from here? Honestly, I have no idea. I'm completely unattached to the outcome. Would I like for the book to become a bestseller? Absolutely. Would I like to be on the Today Show and all the big social media influencers, pages and everything like that? Absolutely. In living my own principles, I know that as long as I keep following my curiosity and as long as I keep giving what I want to receive and as long as I keep treating life like there are no throwaway moments and staying connected to my inner guidance and living with a freedom of choicelessness and being comfortable in this comfort and all those other things, that I'm going to continue to be right where I'm supposed to be. That's the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is to be where I'm supposed to be.

All that means is being grateful and being present and continuing to feel like I'm able to give back as much as possible. That's why I like to share the back story of my guests when I have someone on the podcast who's created something amazing. I don't like to just focus on the highlight reel. I like to talk about how did you get to that point? What obstacles did you have to overcome physically, mentally, emotionally, so that you as a listener can understand that they may have done heroic deeds, but they're not super heroes. They're not immortal. They're just like us. They have feelings. They get hurt. They get pushed back from their friends and their family and their community and they have to find their own comfort in the discomfort in order to keep moving forward.

They have to follow their own curiosity. That same path is what we all have to go down if we're going to really, truly do what we're here to do. It starts with whatever is going on around you right now and wherever you are today and just getting as present as you can to that thing. That's how you're going to find how you are to be used on this planet and in this lifetime for however long you get to be here. Who knows, if you can continue committing to that, maybe one day we'll be in conversation on this podcast talking about your backstory and sharing what you learned along the way. That's all I have for you all today. I'm super excited for you to get your hands on this book. Unfortunately, it won't come out for another several months, but I will be talking about it again, so you can follow more here on the podcast, or on my social channels. Thanks again for tuning in, for listening, for spreading the word. I will see you all in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

[1:07:35] LW: Thank you so much for listening to my solo episode. You can see the show notes for this episode at lightwatkins.com/show. If this is your first time listening to the Light Watkins Show, we've got an incredible archive of interviews from many other luminaries, who share how they found their path and their purpose, such as Yung Pueblo, Ava DuVernay, Ed Mylett, and many more. You can also search these interviews by subject matter in case you just want to hear only solo episodes, or you want to hear from people who've overcome financial struggles, or people who've navigated health challenges. You can get a list of all of those episodes by subject at lightwatkins.com/show.

You can also watch these interviews on my YouTube channel, if you want to put a face to a story, just search Light Watkins Podcast and you will see the entire playlist on YouTube. If you didn't already know, I post the raw, unedited version of each podcast episode in my Happiness Insiders online community. If you're the type that likes hearing all the false starts and the chit chat at the beginning and the end of the episodes, then you can listen to that by joining the Happiness Insiders at thehappinessinsiders.com. You'll also have access to my 30-day mindfulness triathlon, as well as a bunch of challenges and master classes for helping you become the best version of you.

Finally, to help me bring you the best guests possible, it would go a long way if you could just take 10 seconds to rate the podcast. All you have to do is glance at your device, click on the

name of the show, scroll down past the previous episodes and you'll see a space with five blank stars. If you found this inspiring, tap the star all the way on the right. That way, you've left a five-star rating. If you want to go the extra mile, you could leave a review by just writing one thing that you like about the show, or an episode that you recommend a new listener should start listening to the show with as a good introduction to the podcast.

Thank you. I look forward to hopefully seeing you back here next week with a story about someone just like me and you, who took a leap of faith in the direction of their purpose. Until then, keep trusting your intuition, keep following your heart, keep taking those leaps of faith. If no one's told you recently that they believe in you, I believe in you. Thank you so much and have a great day.

[END]