

EPISODE 157

“LW: A month later, you find yourself still thinking about that person. Maybe I overreacted. Maybe I didn't give it enough time. Maybe this, maybe that. Doesn't matter what the maybe is about. The point is, you're still curious about it. Now, your friends may look at that and go, 'Oh, you gave it a good shot. Tried it. The last thing you ever want to do is go back to that person.' There's something inside of you saying, 'Go back to that person. At least go back and have a conversation and see where they are.' We've all been there. Maybe. I don't know. I've been there. I'll speak for myself. I've been there.”

In fact, I used to say, jokingly, I'm the world's foremost expert in breaking up and getting back together, because it's something that I always used to do. You find that your curiosity about it doesn't quite go away. Eventually, you get back together with the person. Then, let's say, three months later, they break up with you.”

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:55] LW: Hello, friends, and welcome back to the Light Watkins Show, where I interview ordinary folks just like you and me who've 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 other people who've either heard about their story, or who've witnessed them in action, or who've directly benefited from their work.

Today, I have another solo episode for you. The theme of this solo episode is how to use spiritual minimalism as a framework for understanding relationships. As you may know, spiritual minimalism is the subject of my upcoming book, *Travel Light*. The subtitle to that book is “Spiritual Minimalism to Live a More Fulfilled Life.” In this episode, I define what it means to be a spiritual minimalist and how that relates to our favorite subject of relationships. I also share a scenario that I think a lot of you will relate to when it comes to meeting someone, or when it comes to the early stages of getting to know someone in a relationship, or when it comes to the dreaded back and forth, breaking up and getting back together.

There's something for everyone at every stage of a relationship. The overall objective was to just give you a practical, relatable framework for the principles of spiritual minimalism, and to help you understand how they can be used to navigate pretty much any uncomfortable or challenging area of life. Spiritual minimalism is more of an inside-out approach to the practice of minimalism. Meaning, you learn how to prioritize your inner work, which is why I keep emphasizing the importance of daily meditation as a foundational practice to becoming a spiritual minimalist.

It makes you more peaceful. It makes you happier. But most importantly, it makes you more present. As we'll talk about in this episode, the importance of presence can make or break a relationship. Okay, so let's dive into this episode and unpack those seven principles of spiritual minimalism, which include cultivating your heart voice and making decisions based on what you hear in your heart, treating life as though there are no throwaway moments, the importance of giving what you want to receive, following your curiosity relentlessly, finding comfort and discomfort, and celebrating the freedom of choicelessness. All right, let's get into this solo episode on spiritual minimalism as a framework for relationships.

[EPISODE]

[0:03:38] LW: Welcome back to my solo episode. This is Light Watkins. This is solo episode number six, which means there are five previous solo episodes. The last one that I did was about the book publishing process. I also covered the seven principles of spiritual minimalism, which is taken from my upcoming book, *Travel Light: Spiritual Minimalism to Live a More Fulfilled Life*. That was episode number 146. Then prior to that, I did a solo episode about finding your purpose. That was episode number 138.

I was listening to one of my favorite podcasts called 3 Books by Neil Pasricha. One thing I really love about his show is that he does a great job of setting the scene of wherever he is when he's starting the podcast. I just wanted to borrow from that with the solo episodes, especially, and I want to set the scene for you, because a lot of you guys are familiar with the fact that I'm living life as a – I'm living life as a minimalist in addition to a spiritual minimalist. The distinction there is spiritual minimalism is basically minimalism from the inside out.

Minimalism is just, you don't own a lot of things. I am still nomadic, which means that I don't have a home base with some contractual ties, or paperwork, or anything like that. Yes, I'm in an Airbnb here in Mexico City. That's where I'm recording this is in Mexico City in my Airbnb. I'm surrounded by furniture. If you were to walk into my Airbnb right now, you probably would not guess that this is the residence of a minimalist, because there's couches, there's chairs, there's dining room sets, there's desks, office setups, two bedrooms, two beds in one bedroom. It looks like this person is living a normal life.

The difference, the difference is that I don't consider myself to be the owner of this stuff. Yes, I have bought stuff for the Airbnb, because it's a long-term Airbnb. I've been in here for about two years now. I'll travel and do speaking engagements and do retreats and workshops. Then I'll come back here to the same Airbnb. Eventually, one day I will leave here. When I do leave here, everything that's in here will stay in here. I'm not taking anything with me. Even though I've bought plants, I replaced the mattress. I've reupholstered some of the furniture is all considered to be a gift to the space.

If you think about it, everything in life is like a rental. We may consider ourselves to be the owner of whatever it is that we're using. Either that is going to have an end date at some point, or you're going to have an end date at some point, in which case, technically, it's a rental. The whole saying of don't ever wash a rental car, which doesn't really make sense. I think what it implies is if it's something that's very short term, don't invest in it. As we talk more about the principles of spiritual minimalism, we're going to go into a little bit more detail about how to look at these items and your relationship to these items, because that's what spiritual minimalism ultimately is about. It's the inside-out approach to minimalism.

Okay, so let me finish setting the scene. All right, so I'm sitting here at my workstation in my Airbnb, which means at my desk. I have the blanket that normally is on my couch spread out over the desk to help diffuse the echo that my microphone sometimes picks up when I'm doing podcasts. I'm talking into Zoom on my iPad. I got rid of my laptop in 2000 and — I believe 2019. I've been laptop-free for four years now. Never thought I could get by without a laptop, but lo and behold, it is possible to get by without a laptop. Who would have thought?

I've been using this iPad ever since then. The iPad is my sole work device, aside from my phone. I honestly have not missed the laptop at all. In fact, it's hard for me to use a laptop these days, because I've gotten so used to the touch screen of the tablet that when I'm using a laptop, I keep touching the screen of the laptop, thinking it's going to do something, but it doesn't do anything. I also do a lot of my own illustrations and art that I post on social media. I do that with my Apple pen and the Procreate® program application on the iPad. I really enjoy doing that, even though I probably should be outsourcing that if I want to be more efficient and blah, blah, blah, but I enjoy it and I don't mind making time for things that I thoroughly enjoy.

[0:08:38] LW: The iPad is sitting up on a little plastic prop, so that it can be a little bit higher. In front of me, I'm just staring at the living room. The window is cracked. It's a beautiful day today as most days here in Mexico City are. It's literally, if you look up perfect weather in the dictionary, there should be a photo of Mexico City, because the weather here is absolutely pristine, around 70 degrees Fahrenheit, 70 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit on an average day. I don't know what that is in Celsius. But yes, beautiful. It's absolutely beautiful.

At the same time, the one thing about living in the heart of Mexico City is you have a lot of vendors who drive around with bull horns and they're selling stuff. They're selling tamales. They're selling sweet potatoes. They are offering pesos in exchange for anything you want to get rid of in your apartment. We may or may not hear one of those vendors coming by in their bull horns during this recording. If that happens, that's what that is in the background. I'm just going to let it all flow. Normally, we edit this stuff out, but we're going to just let it all flow, so you can have the full Mexico City experience with me as I'm going through this solo episode.

Okay, so I'm releasing this book in a couple of months, *Travel Light*. Sounds like a travel book, *Travel Light*. Obviously, it's a pun on my name. For those of you who don't know my story, I moved out of my two-bedroom apartment in Santa Monica, California in May of 2018. I got rid of everything that did not fit into my 22-inch carry-on bag. The reason I got a 22-inch carry-on bag is because I found out just through a basic Internet search that 22 inches was the largest size that they would allow you to take on to the average airline and put in the overhead compartment. I wanted to be in a situation where I didn't have to check my luggage, because I, like many of you have had nightmare situations, where my luggage either came out last and I ended up wasting all this time waiting around. Or if I had a connecting flight somewhere, the

luggage didn't come out at all. You have to stand in that long line and fill out the paperwork and try to remember what you had in your luggage. It's just a big, unnecessary hassle, pain in the ass.

I just wanted to be able to get off of a plane and go. In 2018, this is prior to the pandemic, obviously, I was on the road indefinitely, which means I did not have a home base. I moved out of my apartment. I was staying in Airbnbs. I was staying in apartments. I was staying at friends' houses, hotels. That's the first time I actually came to Mexico City was when I moved out of my apartment and I had friends here who always spoke very highly of Mexico City. I was like, "You know what? I need to go to Mexico City at some point."

Prior to that, I was going to places like Bali. That was one of my happy places where I liked to go and do writing. I was going to places like London and just posting up various cafes, doing lots of walking. I like the culture, the walking culture of London. I like the cafe culture of London. I also liked the natural culture of Bali, being close to the ocean, or just having lots of greenery and being able to walk there as well, for the most part. When I came to Mexico City, I was like, "Holy crap. Mexico City is like if London and Bali had a love child, that would be Mexico City." Because it's green. There are tons of cafes. The culinary scene is really established here. There are lots of really interesting cuisines and people do photo-worthy things with presentation of food. The walking here is epic. It's epic.

One of the things that I've been writing about in *Travel Light* is the love of walking and the health benefits of walking, and the idea of aimless walking. This is a place where you can just do lots and lots of aimless walking. It's called flaneuring, flaneuring, which is a term that I learned here when I was hanging out with a friend of mine who was an urban planner. I was telling her about my love of walking. She said, "Well, do you know what flaneuring is?" I said, no. She said, flaneuring is this term from 19th century Parisian culture, where the men and women of leisure, meaning people who didn't have to go to work every day because their families were well off, or whatever the reason was, they would go out and they would just walk without a destination in mind.

They would oftentimes walk by themselves. Because when you're walking with a friend, you get lost in conversation, you're not really paying attention to what's going on around you. When

you're walking by yourself, then you are more immersed in the environment and you notice things that you probably would not have noticed otherwise. You end up in destinations that you probably would not have planned to go to otherwise. It can lead to a lot of serendipitous and spontaneously beautiful moments. That's the art of flaneuring.

[0:14:02] LW: Mexico City is great for flaneuring, because everyone's walking and there's so many paths and streets and little nooks and crevices that you can just explore and come across the most wonderful little shops and parks and scenes. Yeah, I started coming here back then and I fell in love immediately. I would start coming to Mexico City whenever I had some time in between other engagements.

Then in January of 2021, I was staying in Los Angeles at a friend's place and I just kept thinking about Mexico City. It kept coming through my meditations and the idea of moving there resonated in an expansive way with my heart. I knew that that was meant to be my next step along my path. I came down here, stayed in this Airbnb, really enjoyed the area and the place, made an arrangement with the owner of the Airbnb to see if I could stay here for several months. Off the platform, she agreed.

I kept extending it another three months, another six months, another what have you. I've been here for about two and a half years and it's been awesome. That's where I am right now, recording this. I'm drinking some water with sea salt sprinkled in it. This is the minimalist version of electrolyte water. A lot of times when you go to the store, they'll sell electrolyte water, flavored as raspberries, or strawberries, or watermelon, or whatever. But really, the active ingredients in electrolyte water are water, mainly probably filtered water, or alkaline water, or something like that, and salt, saline.

No need to go out and pay for all the marketing and waste some more plastic, when you can just put some filtered water in a glass and sprinkle some salt in there and you have some electrolyte water, which helps your body absorb the water. If you're feeling a little dehydrated, it's a great way to hydrate yourself with some electrolytes.

Then also, I have my reusable water bottle here that I've been carrying for a while. It's in travel light blue, which is the blue that I've been creating illustrations with and it's the spot color of my

upcoming book. This has green tea. I drink copious amounts of green tea from my refillable water bottle. It's interesting, because I recently announced that as a pre-order contest, I'm going to be giving away a few items that I've been carrying around with me since 2018, one being my day pack.

I downsized from the carry-on bag to, I had a backpack, a 40-liter backpack that was a Patagonia is the manufacturer. Then I got this day pack to put into my backpack, so when I go to a destination, if I don't feel like carrying the whole backpack around with me, I can just break out the day pack and I can put whatever I needed for the day in the day pack. I carry that around with me in the local destination. Then I eventually realized, Light, you have way too much stuff. Time to get rid of some of this stuff.

I downsized from the 40-liter backpack to just the day pack. Now I just have the day pack. Whenever I travel from this Airbnb, I won't take everything with me, but I'll just take whatever fits in the day pack. It doesn't matter if I'm gone for a month, or if I'm gone for a week, or if I'm gone for just a day, it's still just the day pack. When I went to Europe this past February, it was still cold. Oh, no. Sorry, I went to Europe in October and then I did another month-long tour in March, but I only took my day pack, even though it was 10 degrees in some of the locations that I was traveling to. You just layer up and you learn how to travel with just the day pack and that's a part of this spiritual minimalist journey.

I'm giving away the day pack. I'm giving away my meditation shawl in the drawing to people who pre-order *Travel Light*. I'm giving away some mala beads that I've made, because I've been – since I've been in Mexico City, this is not exactly known as the mala bead capital of the world. That would be maybe Deli, or Rishikesh, or somewhere in India. I've had to learn how to make my own mala beads. I have to say, I love my version of the mala beads much more than I love any mala beads I've gotten when I've gone to India. Because they're just more long lasting and durable and I can make them in exact colors that I like.

I've got a couple of strands of mala beads that I'll be giving away. I'll be giving away signed and notated copies of the *Travel Light* galley, which is the free version of the book that you send out to publishers and podcasters and things like that to give them a sense of what the book is like. I'm also giving away my reusable water bottle. Somebody commented on my social media and

goes, "Why would anybody want your reusable water bottle?" First of all, you can clean things. I'm going to absolutely wash and clean everything that I'm giving away. Hopefully, somebody will use it and keep using it in the way that I've been using it. Then maybe they give it to someone else one day and they use it.

It's a symbolic way of showing that we can reuse things. This is a water bottle that's literally been around the world. It's helped me to stay hydrated, while I've been writing these books. I have a whole section in *Travel Light* about reusable water bottles. To me, it actually means a lot. I'm not giving it away lightly. It's something that I cherish a lot. It's just like, if that grosses you out, then you can't go to any restaurants, because every glass you drink from in a restaurant has also been used by thousands of people. My water bottle has only been used by me. You go to a restaurant and you're literally drinking from the same glass that thousands of people have used.

It's funny how we think about things so conventionally. This writing, this work is really an invitation to break out of that in every way. That's what the principles of spiritual minimalism are is it's a framework that we can use to break out of our conventional way of thinking about things that can stop us from participating in things that would help to expand us, stop us from accessing our potential in some way. It can lead to us having a more adventurous, or at least a more insightful life.

[0:20:59] LW: In this episode, I wanted to use the principles of spiritual minimalism as a framework, as an example, just to show you how it could be used in your life with whatever you're dealing with, whatever you're going through. I wanted to use it in the context of our favorite subject, everyone's favorite subject. Can you guess what it is? Drum roll please. Relationships. That's what everybody loves to talk about and read about and think about and debate about is relationships.

The reason why relationships are such a relevant topic is because no matter who you are, you could be someone who's spent 20 years in a monastery meditating, or you could be a relationship expert, or you could be someone who read a bunch of relationship books, knows their attachment style, all the things, and you still find yourself having major challenges in relationships. Relationships are the equalizer. No matter how smart you are, what your IQ, or

EQ is, you are still going to have challenges, because you can't be in a relationship with yourself. You can't be in a relationship with yourself.

A relationship by nature means that there's at least two entities. There's you and something, or someone else. When I say you can't be in a relationship by yourself, I'm sure some contrary out there is going, "Well, hold on. What about me understanding me?" Yes, but the you that's understanding you are arguably two different versions of you. The intellectualization of who and what you are is not who and what you are, right? It's like in the yoga circles, they talk about the witness aspect, when they say, notice your breath, notice your breath, or notice the energy moving around your body, or something along those lines. You don't always identify as your breath, or as that energy, or as your spirit, right? Those are all aspects of you that may be relatively unfamiliar to you. You're in a relationship with that. You're in a relationship with your spirituality. You're in a relationship with your psychology, with your mentality, with your physicality.

That relationship will dictate how you show up for all of those different aspects of yourself. In that way, in the spiritual perspective, everything that you experience is an extension of you, right? Your partner, who on the surface looks like they're completely separate from you, from the spiritual perspective is you. Your partner is you, your environment is you, the trees around you, are you, the bees buzzing around you are you. Everything is you. In that sense, yes, you're always in a relationship with yourself.

But on a more surface level, which is what I was referring to, it appears as though you're not. That's really the opportunity is to find the connection. Find the connection between who I am and what I'm experiencing and how this is related, because a lot of times we don't think that it's related. That's why we can behave in unsustainable ways and react in unsustainable ways, because we treat these things like they're separate from us. We treat the environment like it's separate from us. We'll walk around and throw some trash down on the ground and not care, not think twice about it and not realize that the ground and the environment is all a part of us.

Whereas, we wouldn't do that in our own house. We'll say something snappy to someone who did something that we consider to be offensive. Whereas, we would not ever think that it would be good to say something like that to ourselves, right? If we just find ourselves talking to

ourselves like that, we may think to ourselves, “Okay. Well, I need to go see a therapist, because this is not sustainable.” That's the relationship to ourselves.

When we look at these principles of spiritual minimalism, now I'll just review them for you quickly. We went over them in detail in the last solo episode. A summary version, principles of spiritual minimalism are as follows. Make decisions from your heart, which is what it sounds like, the day-to-day moment-to-moment choices that you're making, either align with your heart or they don't. In order to do that though, you have to cultivate the voice of your heart, and that voice of your heart is like understanding a new language, right?

It's been with you the whole time and maybe you've followed it arbitrarily from time to time, and those were the moments where your life was more adventurous. In the moments where you didn't follow it, or you ignored it willingly, that's where you had more drama in your life, but the voice was always there. You want to cultivate that voice, so then you can start to make choices based on what you hear. Then the third principle is you don't want to treat life as though there are throwaway moments. In other words, as though some moments are more important than other moments. Instead, you want to treat all moments as though they are opportunities for a deeper connection.

[0:26:09] LW: Number four, you want to give what you want to receive. Sounds a lot like the golden rule. What that really means is that there's no free lunch anywhere in the universe. Everything that you want requires some exchange, and it doesn't have to be monetary. It could be energetic exchange. It could be emotional exchange, right? There's some exchange required. Not suggested. Required. In other words, you get back to whatever degree you are willing to make that exchange. That's the fourth principle of spiritual minimalism.

Fifth principle, follow curiosity, follow curiosity. I said before and I'll remind you again, you don't ever have to think about finding your purpose, or your path. All you have to do is follow your curiosity and your path and your purpose will find you. Number six, you want to find comfort in discomfort. Finding comfort in discomfort, which means that there's going to be a lot of challenging moments in life. If you hit the eject button, because life is getting too challenging, you'll miss out on some golden opportunities to expand and stretch your potential.

Number seven is you want to celebrate the freedom of choicelessness. A lot of times we find ourselves backed into a corner where we only have one choice and that choice may not be optimal from a comparison standpoint. Meaning, you look at other people in their lives and think, “Well, why isn't my life like theirs? Why don't I have more money? Why don't I have more sex? Why don't I have more business opportunities? Why don't I have more friends?” Whatever the thing is, because you're in this situation that in your mind, you shouldn't be in, you're experiencing a setback, or an obstacle.

If you switch that and you start to view it as this is my path, this is my purpose, this is an opportunity for me to grow, to expand as I navigate this one choice that I have, then it actually liberates you and it gives you a sense of freedom.

Those are the seven principles of spiritual minimalism, okay? Those are all broken down in the book, *Travel Light*. Again, it's not a travel book. It's a lifestyle manual, actually. Spiritual minimalism to live a more fulfilled life. The objective here is to give you a framework to live a more fulfilled life, while practicing minimalism from the inside out. Now, what does minimalism have to do with all of this? Well, the essence of minimalism is practicing the art of doing more with less. Doing more with less. Instead of needing a bunch of stuff to do the things that you want to do, how can I strip away some of this stuff and get even more done? Get even more done?

First practice that I cover in *Travel Light* in the first chapter, which is cultivating your heart voice, how do you cultivate your heart voice? Well, you got to get still. You got to sit your butt down, you got to close your eyes, and you got to get still on a daily basis. That's how you become conversational in the voice of your heart, right? What does getting still do? It means you cease doing. You cease the doing. The doing sometimes involves busy work, grunt work, distracting yourself from whatever you're going through, whether it's through scrolling on social media, getting on the phone and gossiping, watching copious amounts of television and Netflix and all of that. You could argue and make a good argument that you're spending your time well when you're doing all those things, but you're not hearing the voice of your heart as easily and as quickly.

If you don't have access to the heart voice, then it'll be hard for you to know what opportunities and choices are aligned and which ones are not aligned, and you'll have to default to getting all of your information externally, based on what other people have experienced. Other people's paths are not your path. That's their path, which means it's not relevant to your path. It could work for them, but it may not work for you. The only way to know what your path entails is to be conversational in the voice of your heart, because that's going to tell you what to do when you start to feel that curiosity around certain things.

If everybody else thinks that that thing that you're curious about is a waste of time, then you're going to very easily talk yourself out of doing that thing, or taking that leap of faith, because it's not going to look right to other people. You just betrayed yourself, you betrayed your heart, and it causes the heart to shrink and to get even quieter. That's why it's called the still, small voice. It's not supposed to be still, or small. It's supposed to be loud and annoying, so you can't ignore it any longer. That's what meditation does.

[0:31:04] LW: Meditation is the art. It's the quintessential art of doing less to achieve more. Do less, do least and ultimately, do nothing. Just sit there and close your eyes. Don't focus on anything. Don't let go of. Don't notice anything. Don't witness anything. Don't imagine anything, Don't concentrate. Don't contemplate. Don't do any of that stuff. Just sit there and just be. Being is the opposite of doing, doing less, doing least and ultimately doing nothing. Okay, so let's get back to the topic at hand, the relationships.

When we talk about cultivating your heart voice in relationship to relationships, how is that serving us? There's eight billion people on the planet, roughly speaking. Half of them are men, half of them are women, some of them identify as other genders and all that. This is not a discussion about that. We're just going to stick with the conventional male, female dynamic, just to keep it simple, okay?

When it comes to who I want to relate to, who I want to relate to, in other words, I have these built-in preferences, whether I want to admit them or not, whether I want to acknowledge them or not. I have built-in preferences. Maybe I like tall people. Maybe I find tall people more attractive than people who are not as tall. Maybe I find strong people more attractive than

people who aren't as strong. Maybe I find more voluptuous people more attractive. Whatever your thing is, we all have preferences.

Some of those preferences are hardwired into us. For instance, if you are more feminine, then you may find more masculine traits attractive. If you're more masculine, you may find more feminine traits in the other person attractive. No one has to tell you this. You don't have to read anything. You don't have to see anything. All you have to do is be around in their presence and you'll find yourself, "Oh, wow," you can't stop yourself from paying attention to this person for some reason.

A lot of times, that person may not look like they're the best fit for you on paper, but you find yourself attracted to them. Sometimes, they do look like they're the perfect fit for you on paper, but they're not attracted to you. We've all had probably both of those experiences. When it comes to attraction, they say attraction is not a choice, what we do want to feel is a sense of connection. We want to feel a sense of connection. What is a sense of connection? When we really think about it, when we break it down to its essence, right? Sense of connection is your heart telling you, this is the person for you in this moment in time. That's what connection is.

It even transcends language. It's not to say your heart has to speak to you in your language and say, this is the person for you. No, you just have a feeling. You have a sense of pulling. You find yourself being pulled towards this person. You're always there when they're there and you're always available when they have something going on. They want to include you in. You're happy to sacrifice other obligations to spend time with this person. All of that is under the umbrella of attraction. Attraction is not a choice.

Now, if you are cut off from the voice of your heart, two things may happen. A, you may find yourself not attracted to very many people at all, right? Everyone's annoying to you. Everyone's got issues that you can't ignore. Everyone seems to be a clown, or an a-hole, or whatever. And/or you're looking for perfection in people. You are holding people to this impossible standard, where they're not meeting all of these different demands of yours and they're just not the right candidate for you.

And/or you're attracted to everyone and you find yourself getting roped into dynamics that just are dramatic, or not sustainable, are below your deserving power, right? These are just several symptoms of not having a clear connection to your heart voice. You may project that onto other people and think, "Oh, there's no good man, or good women out in the world, or no one's good enough for me." It looks like, everyone else is the problem, but actually, it's a symptom of not being connected to your heart voice.

The only way to really know that is to connect to your heart voice and you start to see, "Oh, actually, I have this little GPS inside of my heart that's guiding me along my path." It's not that your heart voice is going to say, "Go towards that blonde woman over there and blah, blah, blah." Your heart voice may say to you, "Go to the gym. Start going to the gym. Get into the best shape of your life." Or your heart voice may say to you, start this particular diet, or go back to school, or something that seems to be completely unrelated to relationships.

[0:36:19] LW: Then we go to principle number two, which is make decisions based on what you're hearing from your heart voice. That's how you're going to mainly make choices in your life, which means that if your heart voice is telling you to go to the gym, but then your ego, or your intellectual voice is saying, "Oh, you can't afford to go to the gym," you're going to default to your heart voice. You're going to find a way to make it work. It may not be going to the high-end premium gym. Maybe you end up going to the lower end gym just to start with and get familiar with the environment. Then eventually, you work your way up to the high-end gym, or maybe you start going to the local park where the fitness instructor is taking people through a routine every morning, or you just start doing calisthenics in your house.

You interpret that, go to the gym as let me just start training wherever I can, or whatever the situation is. The point is you listen to it. You're training, training, training, you're making that decision based on your heart voice. Next thing you know, you're reading blogs about fitness. In some blog, they talk about the importance of protein consumption and counting your macros and making sure you're getting a certain amount of protein. It makes sense to you. Whereas before, you never knew that. You thought in order to lose fat, you just had to stop eating and go into the caloric deficit.

Then you could eat whatever you wanted to eat as long as you're not eating above a certain number of calories. Then you find out, well, actually, you do need to have a certain amount of protein to maintain muscle mass and to get tone and etc. You find yourself going to the local supplement place to get some protein powder. They don't have the protein powder that you've researched and found out was the best protein powder for you for whatever reason. They point you to a different supplement place.

You go to this other supplement place and someone is there working there and they're helping you out. They're showing you different types of protein powders and all the attributes of this protein powder versus that one. Then you're wearing this pendant that you got from your uncle who passed away, but he was very heroic. Maybe he was in some war or something and he gifted that to you to remember him by and this is something that's very dear to you and you cherish it.

The person helping you out explaining the protein qualities to you, notices your pendant and makes a comment and says, "Oh, that looks like a pendant from World War whatever." You go, "Yeah, how did you know? I got this from my uncle." He goes, "Well, my grandfather had one of those." You strike up this conversation with this person who works in the other supplement place, not even the one you went to initially. You guys have a connection. This person turns out, you guys have a lot of shared connections and interests and stuff. They end up inviting you to a gathering that their friend is having that they think you would enjoy, based on sharing those interests. You happen to be available that day that the gathering is happening.

You show up at the gathering, the host of the gathering, oh, my God, you can't take your eyes off of them. At the gathering, you barely speak to the person who invited you, and you and the host ended up having this wonderful little connection. That becomes the person that you end up in a relationship with. That's how the heart voice works.

See, we're thinking the heart is going to give us this direct path to our "soulmate." That's not how it works. The heart voice is guiding you along the more adventurous path, because then when you start dating this person, the number one question everybody's going to have, how did you guys meet? You get to tell that wonderful story about how something told you to start working out, you started reading this blog, you heard about protein, you went to the supplement

shop, they direct you to the other supplement shop, you met the person, you guys had a connection, they recognized the pendant, they invited you to the gathering, you didn't really want to go to the gathering, but you went anyway, because you were open that day, and maybe your plans canceled the last minute. You turn up, you meet the host, and oh, my God, you had this connection. It's a beautiful story. It's amazing story, right?

That's why we can get so absorbed in these Netflix shows and episodes and stuff. It's because writers of television and films know that the better stories are the ones where you have lots of ups and downs and twists and turns and plot twists and butts and therefore. That puts you on a path of adventure, puts you on a path of adventure. It's happening anyway, but we sometimes get in the way of it by ignoring the heart voice, because we can't – we haven't cultivated it properly. That's the importance of daily stillness practice, is it allows you to make those connections and it allows you to make decisions from that heart voice without judging it too much and letting your ego get in the way too much, which is again, another thing that can essentially, not block your heart voice is your ego.

That's the external validation part, right? Because I can't hear what's happening inside of me, I'm defaulting to what everybody else thinks about what I'm doing or not doing. That's how I'm making my decisions. Some other person maybe telling you, “Oh, you don't need to work out. You're beautiful as you are.” It's like, yes, that's true, but something inside of me is telling me to start working out. I don't know why. I don't care why. I just know that it's coming from my heart and I'm going to start moving in that direction.

I also know that the outcome and the possibilities are exciting. When I picture myself being in better shape, I get excited about that and everybody would. It doesn't matter who you are, if you're morbidly obese and all of that, if you could picture yourself in the best shape of your life, that's going to make you way more excited than picturing yourself being even more out of shape, even more obese, right? That's just the reality of the situation. It's not good. It's not bad. It's just is what it is.

Both of those possibilities could make you a bit nervous, right? The road to being in the best shape of your life isn't going to be an easy road, and so that makes you nervous, all the work that's going to be involved, all the sacrifices that are going to be involved. Also, the road to

being even more out of shape is going to make you nervous because it's like, oh, my God, there are already so many pain points in my life and now there are going to be even more pain points in my life. That's going to be something that I don't want to experience.

[0:42:56] LW: Being able to transcend the ego and just default to whatever the heart is saying, regardless of what other people think about it, is a superpower. That's why it's principle number two of the spiritual minimalism practice. Then that takes us to principle number three, which is there are no throwaway moments. Going back to that path, right, you have the hit, the intuitive hit to start working out. Then you have another intuitive hit to get on a blog and educate yourself about working out. Then they talk about protein, and you make that choice, right?

Every step along that path is a crucial, it's a crucial step. Now, we sometimes look at moments like the moment you met the host at the party as, oh, that was the big thing. That's the story that gets told. But how can you discount all of those other steps that got you to that place, going from one supplement shop to the other supplement shop, really being in the moment, paying attention. If that guy hadn't been paying attention to your pendant, they probably would not have said something. That was an important part of the puzzle.

Then you, because you were fully there and present, you heard that, you were able to receive that and you were able to reciprocate and show them a worthy amount of attention, enough for them to feel a connection and to invite you somewhere. People say that time is our greatest asset. I disagree with that. I don't think it's time that's our greatest asset. I would say that it's presence. Presence is your greatest asset. Because if you think about it, you can have all the time in the world, but if you're constantly distracted, if you're constantly thinking about the future, regretting the past, you're essentially squandering your time. If you're present, if you're as present as you can be in each of those moments, even if you're like, in what some people may consider to be a throwaway moment, like you're in a line somewhere at a store, or you're in traffic somewhere, right? No one would look at being in a line, or in a post office, or a traffic as a profound moment necessarily, but you can have profound insights anywhere and everywhere to the extent that you're present, to the extent that you're in the moment.

We want to cultivate as much presence as possible. The way you do that is through stillness. Stillness gives your body an opportunity to get rid of the thing that keeps you from being

present. What is that? Well, the umbrella term for it is stress. What stress actually means is you're overreacting to something, or you're maladapting to something. When you overreact, you send a signal to your body saying, whatever was causing the overreaction was more important than what you're experiencing prior to that. Your body is going to memorize all of the different senses related to that thing that caused you to overreact. The next time you come across one of those sensations, your body's going to recognize that as, oh, that was the same thing that was around the last time we overreacted, so we must be in danger again, let's overreact again.

We can find ourselves being bored and overreacting to that. If you're bored a lot, like, let's say you're in solitary confinement. It's hard to imagine something more boring than being in solitary confinement, completely cut off from the general population of prison. You're just in this room by yourself with no window for 23 hours. Nothing to do. You're just you and your thoughts, right? Your body is basically memorizing everything associated with that experience. Let's say, you get out of the prison, you get released, you have your freedom restored, but then you find yourself locked in a room somewhere, a small room about the size of your cell. Your body will start to remind itself, "Oh, you're back in that environment and you could find yourself overreacting to this otherwise innocent situation." You're not back in prison, you're just in a room that looks like the room you were in in prison.

Well, your body says, well, this was the last time you got attacked, so you must be getting attacked again. It's very hard to be present when you're in that situation, right? When you go into stillness, you're essentially resting your body, and that's the time for your body to release those stress triggers, those memories, those sensations that are triggering you into having an overreaction again, and those get dissolved and they get replaced by rest triggers, which allows you to be yourself, be present, be authentic in those environment.

We want as many of those rest triggers as we can get, because that allows us to be more present, wherever we are. That's why, again, stillness is the number one principle of spiritual minimalism, because it unlocks all of the rest of the principles of spiritual minimalism, okay? That allows you to treat all moments as special, all moments as unique, all moments as purposeful. It's not something you have to imagine. You don't want to have to rely on your ego, intellectual prowess to imagine that these are special moments. You want to feel that. You want to feel that in the same way that you felt when you connected with that host at the party, at the

gathering, you felt that was a special connection. You want to feel that wherever you are, that you're in the special connection.

[0:48:19] LW: Then that takes us to principle number four, which is give what you want to receive, give what you want to receive, to understand that there's no free lunch, that everything requires an exchange. This is again, it's a reminder that every connection you have, whether it's a love connection, a friendship connection, an acquaintanceship connection, or even just a casual connection with a "stranger," that connection will be predicated on the degree of attention you're giving it.

For instance, going back to our example, that person in the supplement shop didn't have to tell you about the other supplement shop, but maybe you were more present with that person and they empathize with your search for this particular protein enough to go the extra mile, to go above and beyond and to suggest this other place. You go to this other place and that person felt connected enough to you, because you were present enough to notice your pendant and to strike up the conversation about the meanings of pendants and wars and blah, blah, blah, connection between their grandfather and your uncle.

You are able to reciprocate that, because you're not future focused. You're not like, "Oh, I need to get this right away, so much so that I'm just going to cut this conversation short and get over to this other place." Maybe you were in a hurry. Maybe you didn't have a lot of free time, but that connection was so special that it allowed you to be able to sacrifice something with the place where you were going, or you thought you had to be in the future for having this really special moment in the present, right? Because you recognize from deep within, this is a special moment. Your heart is telling you, stay present in this and you've spent time cultivating that and that in and of itself is a sacrifice, just taking the time for those 15 or 20 minutes each day to cultivate that heart voice through your stillness practice. You see how it's all coming together?

Then you go to step number five, principle number five, which is follow curiosity, follow curiosity, okay? Following curiosity comes into play in a couple of ways. Obviously, you having the initial intuitive hit to start getting into better shape is followed by the curiosity of, okay, well, how do I do that? How do I do that? That's what landed you on the blog. Once you're in the blog, you read this thing about protein and it's like, okay, well, how can I get more protein? That puts you

in the supplement place. Then that puts you in this next supplement place. Then that allows you to go to gathering and then that allows you to strike up a conversation with the host, and so you guys get into a relationship.

Let's say, the relationship starts off wonderful. You have this beautiful honeymoon period. You feel like you found your soulmate. The honeymoon period lasts for what? Three months, maybe six months, and then eventually, tapers off. People's real side starts coming out. Your real side comes out. The other side comes out. You start to see the true purpose of this relationship. Maybe the true purpose, just as an example, is to help you move beyond your abandonment issues. Maybe you've always suffered from abandonment issues. It always comes up in every relationship.

You think back to your previous four or five relationships. It's like, wow, okay, yeah, it comes up around the year mark of a relationship in different forms. Now, this one is starting to come up and I find myself wanting to be controlling of this person coming in and out of my life and what they're doing, because I don't want to be abandoned. I start overcompensating. It's an old pattern. You talk to your therapist about it. Your friends all know about it. Now it's coming up again. They're starting to know, your partner is starting to notice, the woman, the person you met as a host at the event starts to notice.

You end up having a knee-jerk reaction. Okay, this is done. I'm done with this. You break up, right? You break up and you go back to your therapist. Your therapist is helping you see that this is a pattern of yours. Then a month later, you find yourself still thinking about that person. Maybe I overreacted. Maybe I didn't give it enough time. Maybe this. Maybe that. Doesn't matter what the maybe is about. The point is, you're still curious. You're still curious about it.

Now, your friends may look at that and go, "Oh, you gave it a good shot. You tried it. The last thing everyone do is go back to that person." There's something inside of you saying, go back to that person. Go back to that person, or at least go back and have a conversation and see where they are. We've all been there. Maybe. I don't know. I've been there. I don't speak to myself. I've been there.

In fact, I used to say, jokingly, I'm the world's foremost expert in breaking up and getting back together, because it's something that I always used to do. You find that your curiosity about it doesn't quite go away. Eventually, you get back together with the person. Then, let's say, three months later, they break up with you. It's devastating. It's devastating. So devastating people break up with you if you wanted to be with them, okay.

Then you're still, you're even more curious about it now and where they are and what's going on. Some of this can have to do with the ego and some of this can have to do with your heart. Let's say, three months after that, they come back to you, or you guys see each other somewhere and it's like, you start talking and get back together again. Now people are starting to think you're crazy. Your friends are starting to think you're crazy. You're even starting to question your own sanity, right?

Here's the thing. Here's how to follow your curiosity principle can apply to this. I say, you want to go back as much as you are curious about this person, which doesn't seem like the conventional thing to do. The conventional wisdom is clearly is not working and blah, blah, blah. You should honor your boundaries and go no contact and all this stuff. I'm not here to say whether that's right or wrong. I'm just speaking from the perspective of the spiritual memories, because this has been my direct experience.

If you go back, say three or four times, eventually, you will get to a point where you've had the same experience enough times that you're just literally no longer curious about it. You're not curious. At that point, you're able to walk away from it and be fully present in whatever else is happening in your life. Whereas before, if you're being honest with yourself, you weren't fully present. Before you were back at work, maybe you were even dating someone else, but in the back of your mind, you were thinking about this other person. You couldn't get them out of your mind. I wonder what they would say in this situation. I wonder what they would think about this situation. I hope they don't see me with this other person, blah, blah, blah. You're not present.

[0:55:21] LW: From a spiritual minimalism perspective, you're still carrying that energy of that relationship around with you everywhere you go. That's the opposite of minimalism. That's maximalism. We want to do more with less. Temporarily, we go back. We allow ourselves to go back, even if we have to swallow our pride, even if there's a part of us that feels a little shameful

around it, we keep going back. We keep going back. Here's the thing. Our understanding about going back is this. You're not going back because you think the relationship is going to make you happy. You're cultivating happiness inside. That's what it means to cultivate your heart voice. It's coming from that inner place of happiness and peace, right? You're cultivating that as a byproduct of your stillness practice.

The reason you're going back is because you're recognizing that there's something in there. If you feel a genuine connection with this person, then there's something in there for you to still explore in order to grow and expand into your potential. It could be that you're exploring and learning how to respect yourself, or how to honor your boundaries, or how not to put yourself in this situation again. Here's the thing to also remember. Everybody's engaged in some spiritual learning opportunity. Whatever relationship they're in, that's essentially what it is. It's a spiritual learning opportunity. It's a class for your spirit. That's what a relationship is.

If you're not going to learn it with this person, you're going to have to learn it with somebody else. You may as well stay in the classroom since you're already there, you're dressed up for the occasion and you're going through the lessons. The way you know you graduated from it is you're not curious about it anymore. That's how you graduated from that class. There's no time limit on it. There's no time limit on it.

We want to start to look at it in that way, in that way we can depersonalize the things that happen, or that don't happen that we think should have happened, all that chaos that's happening in our mind that keeps yanking us out of the present moment. Because you will eventually get to that point where you're just no longer curious about it, in which case you can be fully present to whatever is going on in the next moment. That's your next class, your next spiritual learning opportunity, okay?

Within that learning opportunity, we want to find comfort in discomfort. This is principle number six of the seven principles. One way of understanding this when it comes to relationships, again, there's the honeymoon period and then there's everything after that. The relationship doesn't start until the honeymoon period is over. In other words, until things start to get a little uncomfortable, that's when the relationship truly, truly starts. It reminds me of something that a

friend of mine once said. He says, something along the lines of a principle isn't a principle until things get inconvenient.

You can have all of the principles and all of the morals and boast about what you are living by and all of that while things are comfortable, but you really don't know until things get uncomfortable. It's guaranteed that at some point in a relationship, things are going to get uncomfortable.

We live in a day and age today where we like to hit the eject button when things get even a little bit uncomfortable. Because we feel we like deserve a situation where no one ever challenges us, no one ever does anything that's unsustainable and/or hurtful, or offensive. That means they're toxic and blah, blah, blah. That's not the reality of the situation. The reality of the situation is that everybody has a little bit of toxicity. Everybody has a little bit of narcissism. Everybody has a little bit of ego. Everybody has a little bit of greed and all the other things that we use as excuses to eject from a situation. Those are again, are all learning opportunities.

Now, I'm not suggesting that you stay in an abusive relationship. That's a whole other conversation. Short of that, if the relationship is just a little bit uncomfortable, or even a lot uncomfortable after the honeymoon period, that's what's to be expected. That's your opportunity to really settle in and understand, "Okay, I'm learning something here. This person on some level is my teacher. I am on some level, their teacher, and we're teaching each other something. We're teaching each other something."

The thing that we're teaching, and this goes back to principle number four, give what you want to receive. The thing that we're teaching them is we're modeling what we want to receive back from them, okay? Just making that one little switch, again, keeps you present enough to sit in a discomfort and then to go back to principle number four. I want more love. Okay, so let me show more love. Chances are, I want the love to be unconditional, which means I have to be unconditional in expressing my love.

[1:00:16] LW: Another mistake we make is we wait for that person to go first. I'll be unconditionally loving as long as they're unconditionally loving, or I'll be generous as long as they're generous. It's not how it works. You have to model it. If you know better, you have to do

better. If you haven't been doing better for a long time, you doing better once is not necessarily going to cause the other person to reciprocate. You may have to do better a 100 times. You might have to be generous a 100 times for that person to reciprocate your generosity. You may have to be empathetic a 100 times. But that's the opportunity and that's how we find comfort and discomfort is we switch our mindset away from, "Oh, this is happening to me," to, "Oh, this is happening for me. This is happening for me. Now I have an opportunity to give what I want to receive."

That takes us to the seventh and the final principle, freedom of choicelessness. Freedom of choicelessness essentially means, I don't want to have tons of options. Just even a practical way of viewing relationships, and this is one of the big challenges that we suffer from as a society is too many options. We don't have to work through anything, because I have a dating app in my phone, and I can sit there and scroll and interact with people who I think aren't going to be better than the person that I'm with. I don't need to be uncomfortable at all, ever.

Getting to a place of connection and presence allows us to see, "Oh, I'm actually in the perfect place right now. I'm perfectly exactly where I need to be in order to work through this thing that I have been struggling with for the last several relationships." The idea of ejecting out of this situation and going into another situation where I'm just going to basically start over with this new person is not as appealing as being in it and really doubling and tripling and quadrupling down into this situation, because I can't really go as deep as I want to go if I'm still entertaining the idea of other options.

I actually want the freedom of choicelessness, because it's liberating. It's liberating. I'm not wasting time and energy in the back of my mind, weighing all the other alternative options. Maybe I should be with this person. Maybe I should be with that person. Anybody, and this is something I see today, we fantasize about the idea that somebody is out there. This is a unicorn that's going to come in and bring a sense of peace and happiness into our lives that we don't currently have. That's not what's happening at all. If we're being completely honest, that's not what's happening.

Because guess what? If you're being honest, you're not a unicorn. You're not a unicorn. There's nothing unicorn-ish about you. You have great intentions. Maybe you have a nice job. Maybe

you have a nice disposition some of the time, but you still have things that you struggle with. None of us are perfect. I'm not perfect. You're not perfect. We all struggle with something. We're all grappling with something on some level. We're all challenged by something and there are themes and patterns that keep showing up relationship to relationship.

Somebody may look at someone like me, this meditation teacher, he's an author, he speaks, he writes, he's funny and blah, blah, blah, as, "Oh, this guy's a unicorn." This is something that I've come up against in some of my past relationships where people hold me to the standard. "Oh, you're a meditation teacher. You're not supposed to be saying stuff like this. You're not supposed to be doing stuff like that." Why not? I'm still a person. I'm still a guy. I still have very, very basic primal needs.

I can't read anyone's mind any more than you can read someone's mind. It's a mistake to look at someone like me, or really, look at anyone as they could potentially be a unicorn. All that means is that you just don't know them well enough yet. When you take time to get to know them, you're going to start to see, oh, actually the grass was not greener on the other side. It was just a different type of grass. If you really want to progress along your path, you're going to have to drill down and go deeper in a situation than you ever wanted to go. Again, that depth of exploration is where all of the gyms that you ultimately want to find within yourself and within the dynamic of a relationship are going to be discovered.

It's not going to be discovered from jumping from one situation to another situation to another situation. There is no unicorn situation out there. There is no perfection out there. There are only choices that you can make that are either perfectly aligned with your heart, or that are not aligned with your heart. If they are perfectly aligned with your heart, then you are going to have a more adventurous life with more adventurous relationships. If you make choices on a consistent basis that are not aligned with your heart, then you are going to have a more dramatic and chaotic life full of dramatic and chaotic relationships. That's where it comes from. It's very simple. We don't have to overthink it any more than that.

[1:05:21] LW: It all comes back to principle number one, which is getting aligned, getting aligned with the voice of your heart. Once you do that, you really don't have to even think about other six principles. Make decisions from your heart, no throwaway moments, give what you

want to receive, follow curiosity, find comfort, and discomfort, give yourself the freedom of choicelessness. Those will all happen pretty much on their own once you make the time to cultivate the stillness. That's your job for today, tomorrow and every day is, when can I make my time in my schedule to cultivate the stillness? Because that's going to be the key habit, the key domino, if you will, that's going to activate all of the other habits, all the other principles of spiritual minimalism.

I just wanted to work through that as a framework so you can see how it applies. We can do it maybe in a future episode with business. We can do it in a future episode with friendships. We can do it with almost any aspect of life. If you have an idea of how you want to see it apply, you can email me, light@lightwatkins.com. Just send me your thoughts. If we get enough ideas that are similar, we'll structure that into another future solo episode.

In the meantime, *Travel Light* is coming out in a couple of months, and I'm doing a pre-order campaign now, as I said. If you pre-order the book, you will automatically be entered into a drawing where you could win one of the following items, the meditation shawl that I've been using for the last several years. You can possibly win one of my strings of mala beads that are handmade by me. I'm also going to be giving away some galley copies, early copies of *Travel Light* that are signed and notated by me with personalized messages. My water bottle, my water bottle that has been used to keep me hydrated and hopefully, somebody out there can use to keep themselves hydrated and keep it going. My backpack, my day pack that I've been using on the road, so you can get one of those.

You will also get immediate access to my seven-day spiritual minimalism challenge, which goes back over these principles and gives you real-world exercises that you can do on each of the seven days to give you even a greater understanding of how these principles can be used. As you can see now, this is very much a lifestyle book that is full of anecdotes and stories and exercises to help you become more of a spiritual minimalist, someone who can do more with less and who lives their life from the inside-out in order to create a more fulfilled existence.

All right, thank you very much for listening and we'll see you back here with the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

[1:08:08] 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 you're intrigued about the subject of spiritual minimalism, make sure to check out the previous solo episode where I talk more about what spiritual minimalism is as a philosophy. Don't forget, when you pre order a copy of *Travel Light*, you will be automatically entered into a drawing where you can win my meditation shawl, my mala beads and a few other items that I've been using along my minimalist journey.

Plus, you'll get immediate access to my seven-day spiritual minimalism challenge. You can show your proof of purchase at lightwatkins.com/travel and we'll put all that in the show notes as well. In the meantime, if this is your first time listening to the Light Watkins Show, we've got an incredible archive of past interviews with other luminaries who share how they found their path and their purpose, such as Shazam actor Zachary Levi, Agape founder Reverend Michael B. Beckwith, 13th director Ava DuVernay and many more.

You can also watch these interviews on YouTube if you want to put a face to a story. Just search Light Watkins Podcast on YouTube and you'll see the entire playlist. I also post the raw, unedited version of every podcast in my Happiness Insiders online community. If you're the type who likes to hear all the mistakes and the false starts and the chit chat at the beginning and end of each episode, you can listen to that by joining my online community at thehappinessinsiders.com. You'll also have access to my 108-day meditation challenge, along with other challenges and master classes for becoming the best version of you.

Then finally, to help me continue to bring you the best guests possible, it goes such a long way if you can just take 10 seconds to rate this podcast. All you do is glance down at your screen and click on the name of the podcast and scroll down past the seven previous episodes, you'll see five blank stars. If you like what we're doing, tap the star all the way on the right and you've left us a five-star rating. If you feel inspired to go the extra mile, leave a review with just one line saying which episode you recommend a new listener to start with, or something you like about the podcast. I want to thank you in advance for that.

I hopefully will see you back here next week with another 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 and keep taking those leaps of faith. If no one's told you recently that they believe in you, I believe in you. Thank you very much and have a great day.

[END]