

# The Minimalist Living

How many things can you live without? I asked myself not once, but many times. And every time I asked myself, a voice in my head answered, "You can live without most of the things you own right now!"

According to statistics, we wear just 20 percent of our clothes 80 percent of the time. I personally can vouch for its accuracy, because in my closet, I have some tops and dresses that I have not worn in more than three to five years. I have not yet donated them because I still like them, but putting them on never crosses my mind! I have a handful of favourite clothes and footwear that I pick almost every time I step out.

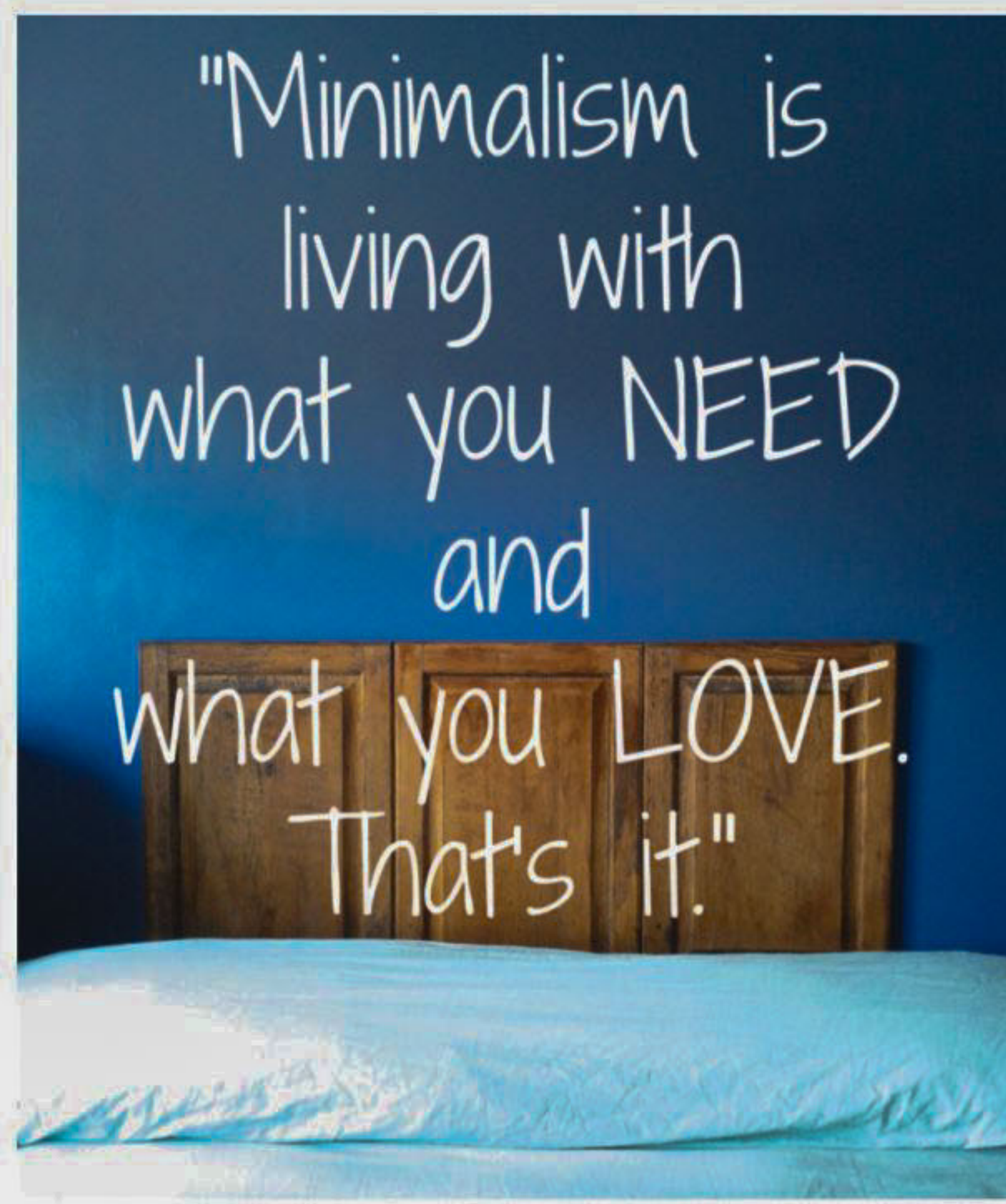
Like many people, I purchase shoes, clothes, accessories and household items on impulse, but only to realise afterwards that they hardly complement me in any way.

But more and more people are moving away from such impulsive shopping habits. They are moving towards leading a more wholesome life instead.

The world is seeing a new kind of people, people who believe in minimalism that is, living with less. These people believe in owning things that they really need and value while getting rid of anything unwanted, non-essential and distracting. They believe that it is possible to live a better, bigger and richer life with less.

People, even successful people, are moving towards minimalism in the West. Although some might think that minimalist living is just a fad, it is much more than that. It is a way to escape worry, tension, and unwanted competition, excessive and unnecessary expenses. It is a path that leads to a more content life, a life where you can pursue your passions, enjoy real freedom, focus on your health, and enrich yourself with new and meaningful experiences.

Academic research has also shown the same; research has shown that people are happier when they 'buy less and experience more,' which means that if you spend on a vacation, it will likely make you much happier than if you buy a



new phone or even a car.

Yes, money does make us happy. But once our basic needs are met, money does not make us any happier. When we purchase a state-of-the-art gadget, for instance, it makes us happy, cheerful and even proud for the first months following the purchase. But have you ever noticed that this kind of excitement is generally short-lived?

This particular kind of excitement associated with physical objects wears off and sometimes, rather quickly. This is the very reason why when the new version of the gadget comes onto the market, we no longer care about the one

we have. We look forward to getting rid of our old version and acquiring the new one.

What is interesting is, we do not see a similar wearing-off pattern in happiness derived from experiences -- we always remember the good times and experiences of our lives. We can always recall numerous details from every vacation we ever enjoyed. We can always recall that evening we spent helping a child get his education, a day we spent in a remote village donating clothes among its villagers, or a time when we learned a new skill.

However, after having lived in a materialistic world for over three decades, I find it difficult, although not impossible, to adopt the idea of minimalism. But then minimalist living is something we should strive for in a world where we now attach too much importance and meaning to material objects. We are often oblivious of the truth that this world is a temporary abode, and whatever we own here will remain here after we breathe our last.

I have been to houses where too many possessions of the owners make them look like warehouses, not happy, cosy places to dwell or raise families. Have you ever wondered why you often fill your house with commodities that have zero personal value to you?

We go to a mall and someone inside our heads tells us that we should shop until we drop. We do not buy things because we need or even want them, we buy them because their manufacturers tell us that we should and must get them! The strong desire that we feel towards a dress, purse, phone or car displayed inside a store is sowed into our hearts through marketing gimmicks carefully planned and executed by businesses. And who benefits financially when we, the consumers, shop for things that we do not need is a question that we ourselves must answer.

**By Wara Karim**  
**Photo: Collected**

## MUSING

# Our first project

Have you ever taken on any project to improve or repair your home? If not, you could probably give it a try because DIY (do-it-yourself) projects are not only fun, they are self-satisfying, too. They also provide a rare opportunity for creativity, imagination and self-expression.

I myself never thought I could actually do something apparently as difficult as staining two staircases, not the steps, but the areas around them. We hired a contractor to do some household improvement jobs and staining the staircases were part of them. But our contractor had to go out of state on some work and the project of stairway staining had to be pushed back by a week.

We grew restless. We did some research online to find out what exactly needed to be done for such a project. But we had never undertaken a DIY project before and therefore, lacked confidence. So we thought we should perhaps visit a home

improvement supplies store first and consult the staff there; they are always so eager to help their customers.

We went to Home Depot, the largest home improvement superstore in the U.S., and found our way to its paint section, and luckily, met the man, Terry, who was in charge of it. He spent half an hour with us, listening carefully to what we actually wanted to do with our staircases. Terry showed us the things that we would need - sandpaper, wood filler, putting knife, painter's tape, paintbrush, mini-scraper, staining pads, stain and gloss.

He also suggested that we bring back some close-ups of the staircases so he could give us more precise recommendations about the kinds of stain and tools that we might need for our first home improvement project.

"Give it a try! You will see that it is not difficult at all," he said.

Terry filled our hesitant minds with

courage and hope. So we went back to Home Depot the next day with photos he had asked for and waited about 20 minutes to get a chance to talk to him. We bought what Terry had suggested and came back home, still a little nervous but super excited about our first FYI project.

We watched tutorials on YouTube and read articles online, whenever we got stuck and needed some tips and suggestions. If you ever want to undertake a DIY project, keep in mind that all kinds of information are readily available on the Internet.

It took us one day to sand the wood, fill the damaged areas with filler and tape the surrounding areas so that the stain would not 'stain' steps and walls in case of an accident.

The next day, I stained the wood and let it air-dry overnight. It took me no more than 30 minutes to get the hang of staining. By the time it was the turn to

apply satin gloss on the newly stained wood, I was more or less a pro! Terry was right after all.

I was impressed with my work; our work! I ran my hands on the smooth surface of the wood countless times because I found it hard to believe that it was my time and energy that gave it such a splendid look. I took photos of our staircases and shared them with friends and family because I could not help but gloat a little. When our contractor came back the following week, even he praised us for the wonderful task we did as first-timers.

Start with a small project. Choose a weekend. Involve your family members. You will discover that there is a ton of joy, pride and self-satisfaction in doing a DIY project to upgrade the look and feel of the place you call home.

**By Wara Karim**