

This Popular Design Trend Is the Secret to Creating a Chic, Happy Home

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There's a reason the [minimalist trend](#) has been so popular among interior designers and design enthusiasts alike for so long. Yes, minimal interiors are aesthetically pleasing (not to mention seriously pinnable), but beyond their good looks, they have major benefits on our health and happiness too.

A study published^[1] in the Society for Personality and Social Psychology observes that [physical clutter](#) can lead to stress and depression, especially in women. There is something calming about a stripped-back space, which is why former magazine editor and author [Natalie Walton](#) wrote [This Is Home](#), a book dedicated to the art of simple living.

"For me, simple living is about focusing on what is important in my life at this point in time," Walton tells MyDomaine. "It's about quieting the noise of the world and being authentic to my journey and my story. Right now, it's about focusing on my family's needs." As a mother of four young children under the age of 10, it is important that Walton's home feels safe and nurturing. "Our choice of materials is deliberately calm and subdued. We also celebrate handmade objects and thoughtful design, as I want our children to appreciate that there is value in the handmade and that our choices can help enhance our everyday experience."

It's also important to Walton that they have both a tidy home and one that's free from "too much stuff." She continues, "Partly, this is for environmental reasons, but also the less we have, the more we can focus on what's really important, and the easier it is to tidy up too—essential for a family of six." Ahead, Walton outlines some of the key reasons we're seeing a cultural shift toward the ["less-is-more"](#) lifestyle, along with some key tips on how to create a streamlined look at home.

Consider Everything That Comes In



CHRIS WARNES ; AS FEATURED IN THIS IS HOME: THE ART OF SIMPLE LIVING , PUBLISHED BY HARDIE GRANT BOOKS

After many years working as a deputy editor on an interiors magazine, Walton started to feel "exhausted by stuff." The editorial team was constantly sent products and samples "all for free" in the hope that they would be featured, but it started to feel excessive. "While I was introduced to some amazing brands and people during this time (some of whom are still friends today), I also started feeling somewhat dispirited by the amount of stuff that constantly surrounded us, and the world in general," she explains. "This also escalated when I became a mother and was bombarded with a whole host of products that I really didn't need. Walking into a baby goods store was an eye-opening experience."

Walton believes our exposure to products as a society has "increased exponentially with the rise of social media and influencers." But she questions whether any of it has made us happier. "Are we more content? Or are we just distracted by surface layers?" she queries. "We are fast approaching a time when we have to seriously look at the way we are living our lives—from our consumption of products to technology—before we all burn out."

The Takeaway: Really consider every single piece that comes into your home. If you don't love it, don't let it in. Or you could apply the one in, one out rule: For any one item that comes in, one has to go out.

Focus on What's Really Important



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If you're really serious about creating a simpler, minimal home (and life), then Walton says you need to get back to basics and focus on "what's really important in your life." She adds, "In this way, it's not a look. It's not minimalism. Instead, it's about using values to guide decorating decisions. Do we want to focus on sustainability, artistry, or handmade, for example? It's also about honoring ourselves and what we really love as opposed to being seduced by trends or distracted by other ideas on living."

The Takeaway: Every piece in your home should have value and meaning. "I keep coming back to designer Dieter Rams' words: 'less but better,'" says Walton.

Make It Meaningful



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If there's one thing that will make any home a happier one, it's meaning. Don't forget the power of sentimentality and how simple objects of value can add context, tone, and connection to a space. That energy cannot be bought. But how do you develop a sense of style to create a meaningful home? "True style comes from an authentic place," says Walton. "It is not created, but rather it evolves. This applies equally to personal style and style at home."

The most stylish people and places are the most authentic, she says. "They are not trying to replicate someone else's look but are creating their own through the prism of their values and honoring their life story. When we tap into our own, we begin the journey to creating a meaningful home environment. We stay on track when we allow our values to help guide decision-making processes."

Tell a Story



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According to Walton, the story of our home starts when we look around at our surroundings. "There is a reason we choose to live in a city, on the coast, or in the countryside," she says. "Something draws us to this area. We should honor and celebrate that decision." Of course, Walton reiterates that this doesn't mean we have to create a theme in our interiors, rather we can weave some of the exteriors inside.

"Perhaps we take our color palette cues from the surrounding flora and fauna," she says. "Or choose materials that are in keeping with what we see on a daily basis. In the city, this might be the use of more industrial materials, whereas in coastal areas we might choose bleached timbers or raw stone. I am a great believer in living in harmony with our environment, and this is the start of the process."

The Takeaway: Walton believes with each piece we add to our home, we should ask ourselves *Does it align with our values? Is it enhancing our experience of day-to-day living?* "Through this process, a story will emerge—our own," she says.

Identify the "Non-Essentials" and Pass Them On



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In order to create a streamlined, simple environment, you need to identify what the "non-essentials" are and then pass them on. But how do you develop this eye? "Live in a caravan for 10 days with your family, as I did recently, and you soon have a clear idea of what are non-essentials," she laughs. "I find the same is true from when you move houses or go on any type of vacation. All of a sudden, we realize how little we need."

But Walton isn't suggesting we should "live like monks" either. Some objects can provide pleasure for pleasure's sake, she says. "However, there is a lot we hold on to because of a sense of obligation, or sometimes we stop noticing certain objects within our home," she adds. "They're just there. These are often the first to go when I go through a period of cleansing and clearing my home."

The Takeaway: If you're struggling to identify the essentials from the non-essentials, ask yourself these questions, *Is it useful? Does it provide pleasure?* If not, it's time to pass it on to someone else who might enjoy it more.

Create a space that nurtures, revives, and restores



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Through writing this book, Walton discovered that we often focus a lot of time and effort and expend many resources on designing and decorating a home at the start of the journey. "However, that is just part of the story," she says. "We should also make time for enjoying our spaces because they are where we can rest, relax, and restore our bodies. Our homes are where we create lifelong memories and form some of the richest relationships of our lives. So let's give our bodies the quality sleep they need and make our beds as enticing as possible. Let's take long and deep baths to ease aches and pains. And linger over long lunches with friends and family. After all, homes are for living."

The Takeaway: Don't just decorate your house, invest some personal time and energy into the overall design and aesthetic so it goes beyond a space and becomes a home.

To peer inside some more beautiful minimal homes, shop *This Is Home* below, and create a meaningful, simple space for yourself.