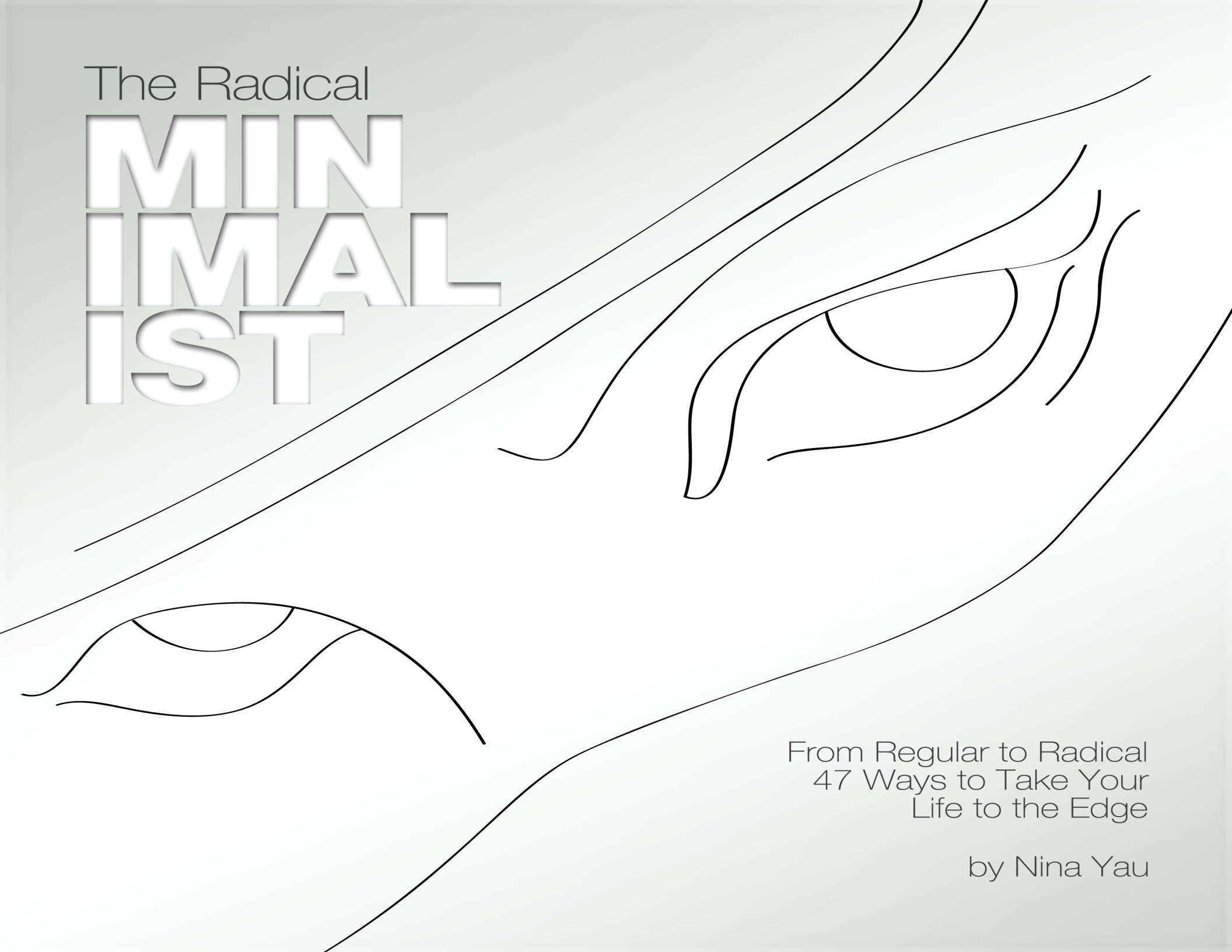


The Radical

MIN IMAL IST



From Regular to Radical
47 Ways to Take Your
Life to the Edge

by Nina Yau

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THE DEFINITIONS

rad•i•cal [*rad-i-kuhl*]

Noun

1. A person who has radical ideas or opinions.
2. A person who holds or follows strong convictions or extreme principles.

Adjective

1. (Used of opinions and actions) Far beyond the norm.
2. Markedly new or introducing radical change.
3. Arising from or going to the root.

min•i•mal•ist [*min-uh-muh-list*]

Noun

1. A practitioner or advocate of artistic minimalism.
2. A person who lives with less.

Adjective

1. Advocating minimal reforms (as in government or politics).
2. Being or offering no more than what is required or essential.

the rad•i•cal min•i•mal•ist

[thuh] [rad-i-kuhl] [min-uh-muh-list]

Noun

1. An advocate of beyond the norm minimalism.
2. A person who holds or follows strong convictions or extreme principles of a minimalist lifestyle.

WARNING!

THIS BOOK IS DANGEROUS

Living a radical life means changing the fundamental belief systems you once had adopted as your own without thinking.

Living a minimalist life means eliminating all clutter and stagnation in your life so you can be free to enjoy the simple pleasures and joys life has to offer.

Living a radical life as a minimalist is not one without change.

Living a radical life as a minimalist is not one without the ability to let go.

Bear in mind that some of the following content will contain some radical and forward-thinking approaches to life.

But you already knew that, considering this book is being read by you at this very moment.

So ... are you ready to live a radical life as a minimalist?

You must first need to decide. The time is now. There will never be the "perfect time."

Take the leap of faith. Jump. I am here to help you and jump with you.

A RADICAL MINIMALIST IS BORN

I wasn't always a minimalist. It may not seem like it now but I used to be an overt consumerist, shopping every weekend, buying needlessly and without purpose or reason to, consuming everything in my path whether that's food, drinks, gossip, advertisements, TV, movies and the like. The cycle was vicious, one in which was very difficult to get out of.

And I certainly wasn't always radical in my thinking and living. I oftentimes wanted so badly to belong, to fit in. Being a part of the status quo was my aim. Being different and unique wasn't necessarily what I wanted because then that would cause others to look at me in a strange way, a way that meant I wasn't one of them.

So how did I get to be like this now?

Things changed. After trying so hard to want to be like others and to want to be an average American girl, I got fed up of putting myself in society's mold of who I should be, how I should talk, what I should wear, the friends I should hang around with, the programs I should watch, the things I should buy and the work I should be doing.

I made a decision and it wasn't easy. Easy was staying where I was at. But something didn't feel right about that.

I decided and made a commitment to myself to choose to live my own life rather than what tradition, society or cultural norms have long dictated for me. I still retain some tradition, so long as it's applicable to me in my life and fits my lifestyle, not someone else's.

And as a Chinese American, there is a fusion of culture as inevitable as tourists taking pictures of famous landmarks while on vacation.

On one side (the West, namely, the United States where I was born and raised), individuality reigns.

"Only one person gets to be at the top of the corporate hierarchy and I will trample anyone who comes my way" type of thinking. Each man for himself. Certainly, not all who are from the West will think like this but many do.

On the other side (the East, namely, the Eastern Asian countries where my roots are from, such as China, Hong Kong and Taiwan), co-dependence reigns.

"What? You can't move far away from your family. We need you to be here for us!" Of course, this isn't always the case, but oftentimes, it is.

I found myself torn between two paths: one which beckoned me to plow through anyone and anything that got in my way and the other which called me to honor traditions no matter what and observe cultural norms as sacred as our ancestry was.

Being torn between two sides is not a good feeling and place to be at. It's like trying to decide who your favorite child is. You can't really choose less you hurt one or the other's feelings.

So I decided I'm going to make, no, blaze, my own path, one in which I've selected choice characteristics from both sides and melded them into one in which I've individualized, conceptualized, and have ultimately, realized.

Instead of the consumerist culture we live in, I made a choice to not mindlessly consume.

And by consume, I mean excessive television and movie-watching, absorbing advertisements without thinking how it can have an adverse impact upon our lives, habitual shopping, gift-giving without any meaning, spending unnecessarily, living extravagantly but without purpose and direction, gluttonous eating and drinking and giving precious time away to those vampires in our lives that don't do anything for us but suck every last bit of life and energy out of us.

I had to stop mindlessly consuming. So I did just that.

Some habits were stopped in its tracks (TV and shopping), others (extracting vampires out of my life and gift-giving without any meaning) were changed gradually over a period of time.

The end result was the same. I chose to stop. And so you must too if you want any positive change in your life to occur and to stay.

What I chose in place of stopping the mindless consumption was living. Living a life free from constant pressure from advertisers, marketers, your friends and peers that say buy this! drink that! eat this! wear that!

All it took was some radical choices I made in order to live a minimalist life, a life in which I made for myself that was free of clutter and noise (external and internal) and filled with peace, joy and wonderful, lasting experiences. I haven't looked back to my status quo days since.

I want to share with you how to become a radical minimalist. For if it could change one life (mine), it surely can change another person's life (yours).

Take what you can from the following pages, adapt it to your life as you see fit and be free to live a radically minimalist life! You deserve it.

PART ONE

What It Means To Be Radical

The Worst Gatekeeper Of All

What are your dreams and passions in life?

Do you even have any? Do you know what they are?

And most importantly, are you doing anything about it?

If you've been on auto-pilot for so long that you've long forgotten what it felt like to be truly free, happy and full of life, now's the time to dig deep within and discover what makes you feel and come alive.

Here's a very simple tip to discover what your dreams and passions in life are:

Think back to when you were a child, what you had wanted to be when you grew up.

That's the secret.

Why is this so important?

To look back and reflect upon our childhood memories, some of which may have been very painful and difficult? What does this have to do with reality? The reality is you have bills to pay, mouths to feed, mortgages, debts to pay down and loans to pay back.

But you also have to realize that the reality is, life is seriously short.

Too short to be completely miserable where you're at and wondering what have you done with your life to get to be in the place that you are in.

As a child, our dreams were hardly ever downplayed. No well-meaning adult would purposefully put down a child's dream of becoming the President someday, or a doctor, astronaut, firefighter, engineer, teacher, artist, musician, ballet dancer or actor.

A child would say, "I want to be a singer when I grow up!" and the adult would say, "A singer? How wonderful!"

As an adult, if you said you wanted to change careers to pursue songwriting and to be a professional singer, people would not say, "A singer? How wonderful!"

More than not, they would say, "Ha! A singer? Come on, you must be joking."

Why is it that we have become such realists that we so willingly oblige to not only lock our dreams away, but to burn the box of dreams until all that's left is a smoky, ashy pile of memories?

Call me an optimist, call me a dreamer. Call me unrealistic, even.

But I firmly believe that discovering our dreams again as an adult and then working towards it is something we have got to do.

Life is so precious that I would hate to see others completely depressed and upset with where they're at. In fact, that is a lot of what I see and it is just absolutely heart-breaking. It is, more or less, a life of talent and unique capabilities, wasted.

As a child, we have not become realists yet. We don't worry about our bank statements and our finances. We don't worry about picking up groceries on the way home from work. We don't worry about having to pay for our child's education. All we have to worry about is ourselves.

As a child, we did what came naturally and fun for us. We played. We laughed. We dreamt. We created. We sang. We danced. We loved life.

And when we said things like, "When I grow up, I want to be an artist!" we believed it. In fact, I remember hearing myself distinctly say that out loud to my best friend when I was young. It is as clear to me as if it just happened yesterday. She wanted to be a piano teacher and I wanted to be an artist. And in our world, that was perfectly fine and natural.

Nothing held us back from saying our dreams aloud, but as we grew up, someone did hold us back. You can say as much as you want that it was your parents that forced you to go to law school when you really wanted to be a stockbroker. Or that it was your well-meaning aunts and uncles who strongly suggested you pursue a pharmacy degree rather than the teaching degree you'd rather earn.

Look in the mirror. It is you and only you that ultimately held you back from becoming the person you truly wanted to become.

We have choices as an adult. They may be more limited now than say, 20 years ago or when you were just finishing up school, but we still have choices.

Uncover what your dreams are by thinking back to when you were a child and what you wanted to be when you grew up. That is the secret.

The Power of Small Dreams

Wait, isn't it always about "dreaming big"?

Sometimes, dreaming small can make a world of a difference.

Dreaming small, like taking a drawing class to refine one's skills, can turn into a full-blown passion and art career, without even realizing it.

Starting off small and taking those little action steps can have a dramatic ripple effect. How one tiny pebble can cause a ripple to go through the entire body of water is just amazing. Likewise with people and their small dreams.

What started as a family-owned restaurant became the McDonald's franchise. A small coffee shop in Seattle became Starbucks. A local pharmacy in Chicago became Walgreens.

Did these entrepreneurs ever realize their small dreams of having that one little store would grow into something so large, so massive? Probably not.

Start small by dreaming small.

From there, anything can happen.

Don't Listen To Anybody

People can be terribly wrong at times. Some may mean well and some just don't know any better.

If you listen to everyone's opinion and advice on every subject matter under the sun, you'll be swimming with so many opposing viewpoints that in the end, you still don't know what to do.

What happens next is you end up drowning.

Go with your gut feeling. It usually isn't wrong. And if it is, well, at least now you know it wasn't right in that particular situation.

Quit

Yes, I'm telling you to quit.

The popular motto echoed in sports circles, business/self-help books and popular thinking is "Winners never quit, and quitters never win."

Guess what? That's not entirely true.

Why is that?

"Winners," or those who have succeeded to where they want to be, are those that have quit many endeavors in order to be where they are. If they pursued every single opportunity out there and spread themselves thin because they didn't want to quit, they wouldn't be considered a winner now.

If pride is an issue, one has got to let it down. Quitting is perfectly natural and alright for many situations.

Put Your Weapons Down!

I've been interested in traditional martial weaponry for quite some time now, and that would certainly complement my karate skills (read: mad ninja moves).

I signed up for a one-month class but quit after 2 weeks, having realized that right now, my focus is to be able to support myself full-time as a writer and artist.

With training in karate weekly, reading, writing and creating art, that doesn't leave me much room for anything else.

Just adding another activity, one in which there was a 4-year minimum until one can achieve mastery level, would dilute the rest of my activities and water down my energy. I need all I can in order to stay focused and do what I love to do.

There will be a time and place for everything.

Knowing when to quit something in order to stay laser focused on what matters most at this time in your life will undoubtedly make a huge difference. You'll not only advance further towards your goals you've set for yourself, you'll be infinitely happier than if you had decided to pursue every avenue.

Learning to quit is also learning to say no, at the right times.

Say No. And No. And No.

People say no all the time. Saying yes is foolish when it's not the right fit or occasion to. What do you think recruiters and head hunters do?

They say no. All the time, to many, many people. If they said yes because they thought that person was nice but not necessarily the best candidate for the position, our corporations would be in a dire state (more so than it is now).

How does one learn to say no? Here are 2 simple ways:

1. Realize you have the right to.

You choose what you want to do (for the most part at least). So therefore, you have the right to say no when it comes to certain circumstances. No to yet another bridal shower for the fifth time this month. No to a time-consuming project that doesn't help you in any way. No to an irresponsible friend who asked to borrow your car.

You have the right. Now utilize it.

2. Be kind, but firm.

There's no reason to be harsh when saying no. It's not good for relationships and building connections with others.

When declining an invitation, kindly say no and stick with it. If you need to provide a reason or explanation why, just be honest and say though you would love to help out, this is just not a priority right now. Refer them to someone who can be a good replacement for you instead.

The (R)evolution Of You

Before you reinvent yourself, you obviously must have first invented yourself.

How's that?

Through your childhood experiences, work experiences, family values, popular/social/cultural beliefs, education and your own personal viewpoints/values/beliefs.

Now, reinvent yourself.

Why?

Are you perfect the way you are? No.

Are we trying to achieve perfect? Absolutely not.

What we are trying to do here is to continually grow and change by evolving ourselves as we:

1. Develop new habits
2. Learn new things
3. Make new friends
4. Travel to new places
5. Try new foods
6. Learn new languages
7. Take new classes
8. Start a new career
9. Start a new relationship
10. Get a new pet
11. Get a new haircut
12. Move to a new city
13. Move to a new country
14. Start a new project
15. Start a new life

Who you are now does not mean this is who you ought to be tomorrow. Or next month or next year.

You can be a different person, for the better, if you so choose by reinventing yourself.