

## 7 - Graham Hill: Less stuff, more happiness

What's in the box? Whatever it is must be pretty important, because I've traveled with it, moved it, from apartment to apartment to apartment.

Sound familiar? Did you know that we Americans have about three times the amount of space we did 50 years ago? Three times. So you'd think, with all this extra space, we'd have plenty of room for all our **stuff**. Right? Nope. There's a new industry in town, a 22 billion-dollar, 2.2 billion square foot industry: that of personal storage. So we've got triple the space, but we've become such good shoppers that we need even more space. So where does this lead? Lots of credit card debt, huge **environmental footprints**, and perhaps not coincidentally, our happiness levels **flat-lined** over the same 50 years.

Well I'm here to suggest there's a better way, that less might actually equal more. I bet most of us have experienced at some point the joys of less: college -- in your dorm, traveling -- in a hotel room, camping -- rig up basically nothing, maybe a boat. Whatever it was for you, I bet that, among other things, this gave you a little more freedom, a little more time. So I'm going to suggest that less stuff and less space are going to equal a smaller footprint. It's actually a great way to save you some money. And it's going to give you a little more ease in your life.

So I started a project called Life Edited at [lifeedited.org](http://lifeedited.org) **to further** this conversation and to find some great solutions in this area. First up: crowd-sourcing my 420 square foot apartment in Manhattan with partners Mutopo and Jovoto.com. I wanted it all -- home office, sit down dinner for 10, room for guests, and all my kite surfing gear. With over 300 entries from around the world, I got it, my own little jewel box. By buying a space that was 420 square feet instead of 600, immediately I'm saving 200 grand. Smaller space is going to make for smaller **utilities** -- save some more money there, but also a smaller footprint. And because it's really designed around an edited set of **possessions** -- my favorite stuff -- and really designed for me, I'm really excited to be there.

So how can you live little? Three main approaches. First of all, you have to edit **ruthlessly**. We've got to clear the arteries of our lives. And that shirt that I hadn't worn in years? It's time for me to let it go. We've got to cut the **extraneous** out of our lives, and we've got to learn to stem the inflow. We need to think before we buy. Ask ourselves, "Is that really going to make me happier? Truly?" By all means, we should buy and own some great stuff. But we want stuff that we're going to love for years, not just stuff.

Secondly, our new **mantra**: small is sexy. We want space efficiency. We want things that are designed for how they're used the vast majority of the time, not that rare event. Why have a six burner stove when you rarely use three? So we want things that nest, we want things that stack, and we want it digitized. You can take paperwork, books, movies, and you can make it disappear -- it's magic.

Finally, we want **multifunctional** spaces and housewares -- a sink combined with a toilet, a dining table becomes a bed -- same space, a little side table stretches out to seat 10. In the winning Life Edited scheme in a render here, we combine a moving wall with transformer furniture to get a lot out of the space. Look at the coffee table -- it grows in height and width to seat 10. My office folds away, easily hidden. My bed

just pops out of the wall with two fingers. Guests? Move the moving wall, have some fold-down guest beds. And of course, my own movie theater.

So I'm not saying that we all need to live in 420 square feet. But consider the benefits of an edited life. Go from 3,000 to 2,000, from 1,500 to 1,000. Most of us, maybe all of us, are here pretty happily for a bunch of days with a couple of bags, maybe a small space, a hotel room. So when you go home and you walk through your front door, take a second and ask yourselves, "Could I do with a little life editing? Would that give me a little more freedom? Maybe a little more time?"

What's in the box? It doesn't really matter. I know I don't need it. What's in yours? Maybe, just maybe, less might equal more. So let's make room for the good stuff.

Thank you.