



## MONK MANUAL

Find You Inner Monk:  
10 Principles for Peace and Purpose



We live in a culture that seems obsessed with happiness, productivity and self fulfillment. Right at our fingertips, there's never been more options telling us we can instantly solve all three.

With one quick tap, we can capture a perfect picture of our face. With another tap, we can hear a symphony. Tap, we're now chatting with someone on the opposite side of the world. Tap, tap, tap. Free 2-day shipping. Tap, tap, tap. Hot pizza at our door.

And yet...

We are anxious. We are divided. We feel unrest. And if we are honest, many of us feel a deep sense of uneasiness—a terrifying gravitational pull toward emptiness and meaningless — which we drown out with countless distractions in our daily life.

We have been told that the solution is more. Do more, know more, experience more, and own more. It helps for a time, until it doesn't. Until things quiet down and we look out from our newly amassed state only to realize we fundamentally don't feel any different.

Monks operate off a different life formula. They know that more is not synonymous with better, it's just more. They know that a full life is free, always available to us—only costing us the courage to face ourselves and reality itself with total honesty.

Can those of us living in the modern world really live like monks? Well, no—not exactly. The structure and external expressions of a monk do not cleanly fit into modern life. There's a reason monks seclude themselves in monasteries and make life-long vows.

But good form always follows the desired function, and the function of the monastic system, in both the east and the west, is learning to let go and live the full life that has always been there.

### IN A WORD, FREEDOM.

And while we may not be able to live out the exact form of traditional monasticism in our dynamic modern environments, we can still live out its function. We can still live full(er) lives, we can grow in freedom, and we can become more of who we truly are each and everyday.



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GRATITUDE

SIMPLICITY

INTENTIONALITY

ORDER

GENEROSITY

RELATIONSHIPS

REFLECTION

PRESENCE

BALANCE

TRANSCENDENCE

Gratitude requires a certain type of endurance. It takes patience—especially with ourselves. It's an intentional habit, crafted over time, that enables us to see things, people, places, and circumstances properly, keeping our perspective fresh and our goals and ambitions all the more attainable. Monks know that gratitude is the foundation to a meaningful and happy life.

Initially, gratitude can feel unnatural, and a bit unsettling. We might think: how can we be grateful when reality falls so short from our expectations? We might wonder: what if gratefulness is merely a mental sugar pill? A trick, hindering our progress and making us complacent?

These doubts are natural, but often, they are the result of fear clouding our vision.

What we focus on tends to grow. And when we choose to celebrate what's in our life, instead of focusing on inadequacies fueled by fear, we begin to notice the goodness that can be discovered in everything. We see opportunities in challenges. We see hope in disappointment. We see joy, and in turn, we experience joy.

This is not oblivious naivety. Some kind of suffering is always inevitable. But, through gratitude, we each have the opportunity to see the creative element hidden within the pain and disappointment in our lives.

Gratitude is a mindset that leads us to freedom, allowing us to see the beauty all around us. When we lead with gratitude, we allow the layers of our fears to slowly peel away, pushing us to be fully present, fully ourselves, and fully alive.

## WAYS TO INCORPORATE THIS PRINCIPLE

### THEMES

✓ Humility   ✓ Acceptance/Let Go   ✓ Choose Joy

### HABITS

- Write down three things you're **grateful** for everyday for thirty days. There's just one rule: do not repeat anything you've previously written.
- Everyday, when you wake up, let the first words that come out of your mouth be **thank you**. Repeat this principle again right before you go to bed.
- Every time you eat a meal, take 30 seconds to consider and express **gratitude** for all the people who contributed to that meal, from the farmers, to the truckers, to the cooks.

### QUOTE

**"Through gratitude, we each have the opportunity to see the creative element hidden within the pain and disappointment in our lives."**

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There is an understated power to simplicity. When we live a life of simplicity, we strip away the barriers inhibiting us from living out of our true self. We're freed from the complex web of distractions and false needs we've built into our relationships, routines, and expectations. This freedom then resonates throughout our life, built upon a strong sense of steadiness and vision.

Simplicity begins with letting go.

Monks express this tangibly by pairing down to the essentials—both emotionally and physically—liberating themselves from the things that weigh down their mind, body, and spirit. What appears to be a form of stark privation under the surface becomes a form of tending, a gardening to make room for the most important seeds of the coming season. As we slowly become aware of the unnecessary complexities taking up too much real estate in our mind—from resentments, to habitual worry, to gossip, or frustrations—we find ourselves lighter, more focused, and more capable of engaging the abundant opportunity that flows all around us.

To stay clear-headed and clear-sighted, consider establishing boundaries. Your boundaries needn't be the same as monks—but these demarcations—these refusals—these “no's” create space for a deeper “yes”. Rather than living a shallow experience of life, hyper-actively tasting a little bit of everything, boundaries force us to focus, empowering us to go deep. These structures and rules give us a designated space to live in.

When these rules are made with wisdom and sound reason, they provide a refuge from the noise and a strong sense of purpose and freedom. They allow us to focus our energy on our true priorities: the moments that bring us joy, the tasks that bring us meaning, and the essentials that allow us to thrive.

#### WAYS TO INCORPORATE THIS PRINCIPLE

##### THEMES

✓ Simplify   ✓ Say no   ✓ Detachment

##### HABITS

- Spend a month doing some **inner decluttering**. You can do this by limiting the news and information you consume via the radio, podcasts, television and online to certain times of the day—while simultaneously carving out time for silence and solitude.
- Spend a month doing some **outer decluttering**. Spend 15 minutes a day focused on simplifying clutter on your desk, on your walls and in your drawers.
- For one month, don't spend money on anything that isn't truly an **absolute need**. At the end of the month reflect on your experience.

#### QUOTE

**“What appears to be a form of stark privation under the surface becomes a form of tending, a gardening to make room for the most important seeds of the coming season.”**

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Monks know that their time and presence is the most valuable currency they have. They're constantly in touch with a truth that the modern world often forgets: how we spend our time is how we spend our lives.

All too often, the way we spend our time is disconnected from the vision we have for our life. In any given moment, we can feel overwhelmed by it all. So many choices, so many thoughts, so many feelings—all clamoring for a reaction. And so we react. Sometimes poorly, sometimes inadequately, sometimes half-heartedly. We give the important people and events of our life scraps of our attention, while enabling distraction to consume us.

At the end of the day, this makes us feel lousy. We may guilt-trip ourselves and blame our lack of discipline. Or maybe we just throw in the towel, exhausted to the bone. But what we might not realize is that our instinctual knee-jerk reactions have less to do with discipline, and more to do with a lack of awareness. Discipline itself is a fruit of awareness—which then leads to the joyful principle of intentional living.

When we live intentionally, we are choosing to be conscious of the bigger picture, and how each decision we make contributes to it. This type of awareness provides us with more direction, more peace, and more understanding of our actions—and as a result, more control of our reactions.

The more we are able to zoom out on our lives, the more we are able to live intentionally. After all, intentionality is intimately tied to the deepest questions of our life. As we connect to these questions with more conviction and honesty, we'll find that our actions are more authentically aligned to how we truly want to spend our most precious resource: our time.

## WAYS TO INCORPORATE THIS PRINCIPLE

### THEMES

✓ Slow down    ✓ Trust the process    ✓ Eliminate distractions

### HABITS

- Build the habit of **planning** your daily priorities and schedule the night before so you wake up ready to begin your day.
- After you plan your week, look at each commitment, and ask yourself: "Is this really **essential** to what's important to me?" If the answer is no, cancel it.
- Draw a line down your Monk Manual daily schedule. Block out how you plan to spend your time and with what activities on the left hand side. As you live out your day **track** how your time was actually spent on the right hand side. At the end of the day look back and see what you learn.

### QUOTE

**"Discipline itself is a fruit of awareness—which then leads to the joyful principle of intentional living."**

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You've probably noticed that there's a rhythm to the life you're leading. You have systems, habits—a set of actions and behaviors you're constantly repeating on autopilot. From time to time it's worth asking the question: does this routine bring a sense of peace and order? Does it align with your real priorities?

In a distracted culture, the word "routine" can show up to the party with a black eye. It's easily mistaken as a life of mundane repetition: equal parts ordinary, dull, and stifling. Because of this misconception we may instinctively want to run away from it as fast as we can. We evade anything that smells remotely close to a humdrum life, constantly on the lookout for something more novel.

It's a natural, human inclination to search for novelty. But adhering to the right routine is the opposite of boring. If we can learn how to use it, routine becomes a tool that encourages us to dig deeper—rather than digging everywhere. It lets us explore the excitement of the everyday, resulting in a richer, more thoughtful life.

Monks remind us that our lives are spent no matter what we do. They know that having processes and boundaries doesn't just eliminate distractions, but steadies us to grow in a richer understanding of ourselves and the world we live in. Ultimately this enables us to have a more profound experience of the present, because there is no where else we can really "be."

However, creating a personalized sense of order in your life isn't easy, especially at first. It takes commitment and it takes perseverance. And initially, it might take a little discomfort as we eliminate a routine based on mere momentum with one based on intention.

## WAYS TO INCORPORATE THIS PRINCIPLE

### THEMES

✓ Discipline/Commitment    ✓ Obedience    ✓ Structure

### HABITS

- Commit to **time blocking** for one month. Each day block out every hour of your day and how you plan to spend it.
- Create a morning **routine** and commit to following it for one month. The more consistent it is from day-to-day the better.
- Create an evening routine and commit to following it for one month. The more **consistent** it is from night-to-night the better.

### QUOTE

**"If we can learn how to use it, routine becomes a tool that encourages us to dig deeper—rather than digging everywhere."**

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Real generosity is not a grandiose gesture that makes a sudden, mighty statement. It's a humble, quiet spirit that perseveres patiently. As a 20th century monk, Thomas Merton explains: "...it bears with everything gladly without complaint because it no longer stops to reflect that there is anything to bear."

Leading with a generous spirit means more than giving of yourself. It's about leading with freedom. It's taking that little scorecard we all keep in our pockets—the calculating one that keeps tabs on who owes what and when—and ripping it into oblivion—letting it gently fly away on a breeze, never giving it a second thought. It goes beyond forgiving someone's wrongs. It's believing in someone's future, and with a full heart, helping them grasp it.

Practicing generosity can feel uncomfortable, and maybe even kind of foolish. In a world where we face dashed dreams and disappointing people, this is a natural response. Yet paradoxically when we persevere with a generous spirit, we receive far more than we give. We see others in ourselves and ourselves in others. And, we start seeing the light in the darkness—and the good in what we would have otherwise missed. We realize that when we give to someone else, we can't help but simultaneously give to ourselves.

Generosity is always linked on some level to vulnerability, which is what makes it so hard. We're afraid of being hurt, of feeling taken advantage of, and giving—only to receive nothing. But just as still water ripples with every movement, so do our actions affect everything around us, including ourselves.

## WAYS TO INCORPORATE THIS PRINCIPLE

### THEMES

✓ Connection    ✓ Forgiveness    ✓ Service

### HABITS

- Everyday, do one act that you know is valuable to someone else, just to build the habit of **servicing**. Bonus points if they won't know it was you, or if it's something you don't naturally like doing.
- Think of someone you need to **forgive**. Everyday take five minutes to think about what their life is like and the difficulties they face. At the end of the month, journal about your experience.
- Give up **gossiping** for one month. Take it one step forward and don't say anything negative about someone or something unless it's truly necessary. Try to give people the benefit of the doubt; voice this benefit of the doubt, and change the subject if a conversation is intent on detracting from the person.

### QUOTE

**"Leading with a generous spirit means more than giving of yourself. It's about leading with freedom."**

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Relationships drive everything we do. As infants, we're born into this world entirely dependent on the them. Throughout childhood and adolescence we turn to relationships to sort out who we are, what we value, and what we want to become.

And as humbling as it may be, this need for relationship doesn't go away at any age—it simply transforms. Relationships, whether they're with others, ourselves, nature, or our Higher Power—provide us meaning, purpose, and connection. Just as an infant needs to be nurtured in order to survive, so we need relationships to thrive and live a full life. But, unlike infants, we must also feed our relationships in return. We are an interdependent people and every action we undertake effects our relationships and the lives of those around us. There is no such thing as an entirely private action.

Hospice nurses cite that the biggest regret of the dying has nothing to do with achievements or financial investments—but has everything to do with relationships. Seemingly enlightened in the face of death, they gain a perspective that comes only when one is able to see the whole of their life. From this vantage point they realize that it's only through relationships that we connect with the world, and it's only through relationships that we grow into the people we are.

So, what stops us from embracing relationships more fully? For one, relationships are hard. Sometimes they don't even come naturally. They can be frustrating, tumultuous, and even wreak havoc. They can even become dangerous, bringing pain and sorrow. And while a few last a lifetime, most only last seasons. But the biggest hindrance of all is that they require both vulnerability and investment—which takes courage and trust.

We all have our own communities—they're our families, coworkers, friends, and spouses. Yet they only flourish when we have the courage to let our roots grow and really connect; and they can only bloom when we continually take care of them, feeding them with the kindness they deserve.

## WAYS TO INCORPORATE THIS PRINCIPLE

### THEMES

✓ Trust    ✓ Courage    ✓ Commitment/Stability

### HABITS

- When with friends and loved ones keep your phone on silent. Meals are a great place to start. Try to be **fully present**.
- Each day write down one person that has **taught** you something as well as what they've taught you.
- Find an **accountability partner** and begin meeting with them once a week. Find a proven accountability process online or make up your own.

### QUOTE

**"This need for relationship doesn't go away at any age—it simply transforms."**

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Our past is the greatest of teachers. Yet our future largely hinges on whether or not we realize what history is trying to teach us. To hear its message, we can start by developing a type of radical honesty—an honesty that's both free of prejudice and full of understanding, built through deep reflection and acceptance.

Deep reflection is a lost art most of us were never taught. Yet, without learning to be truly contemplative, we find ourselves scattered, distracted, or worse—moving faster and faster toward the wrong finish line. Mastering reflection takes lots of principle, and even more patience because it forces us to stop and look at the map, and regularly reevaluate where we're going.

Reflection begins with solitude, which means learning how to quiet our mind, embrace the silence, and listen. Through practice, we develop higher levels of freedom, as it allows us to discern the source of our peace—and find clarity in where our lives are headed.

As our reflective practice grows, it only becomes more rewarding. We'll have a stronger conviction in our decisions, and a fuller understanding in who we are, and a sense of purpose and meaning we didn't even know we were capable of.

#### WAYS TO INCORPORATE THIS PRINCIPLE

##### THEMES

✓ Honesty    ✓ Quiet    ✓ Listen

##### HABITS

- Take 10 minutes every morning or evening to meditate.
- Create a habit of journaling each day for 10 minutes. You can use the bullet space in your Monk Manual or use a separate notebook to collect your thoughts in. Whether you start by just writing down what you did that day, or just free write whatever is on your mind, the important thing is to build the habit and find what works best for you.
- Limit technology, email and/or social media to weekdays and let your weekends be a time of connection and reflection. Alternatively, decide no internet or phone before e.g. 8am or after 8pm.

#### QUOTE

**"Reflection begins with solitude, which means learning how to quiet our mind, embrace the silence, and listen."**

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When was the last time you felt joy—real, deep, exalting joy? You know, the kind that bubbles up inside you and elevates everything around you. Maybe there was laughter, or maybe there was just a golden silence. Either way, you were fully present in that moment, weren't you? The pain of the past and the anxiety of the future was far from your mind.

Peace, joy — and likewise, God—can only be found in the present moment, which is why mastering the art of being present isn't just a tip to become a better conversationalist (although it's that, too). Being present is how you find peace and joy in your one and only precious life. It's where the richness lives. The good news is we can reach out and touch it right here, right now!

As children, this was easy. But as adults, we're always processing, caught up in managing and controlling all the world around us. The ability to analyze what just happened, and what might happen next is what has helped us stay alive as a species. But today, many of us struggle with a constant sense of anxiety about the future and the past, even though no danger is really present.

Life in the modern world is a far stranger beast than the woolly mammoth. So, initially, trying to be fully present can feel a little reckless. We are so used to control that it's hard to let go, and trust that it really is going to be okay, after all. Engaging with what's right in front of us, which means giving ourselves fully to the present moment, requires vulnerability—which can be terrifying.

But in order to feel real peace with ourselves, we have no other home except the present. We can start with little habits that slowly strengthen our resolve to make peace through awareness the norm—giving us real freedom to experience a deep and lasting joy in the everyday.

## WAYS TO INCORPORATE THIS PRINCIPLE

### THEMES

✓ Be Here    ✓ Awareness    ✓ Wonder

### HABITS

- Take a moment every time you get up or sit down to bring yourself back to the present moment. Alternatively, set a timer on your phone to go off every hour as a reminder to return back to reality as it is right in front of you.
- Take a ten minute walk once a day, preferably at the same time each day. As you walk around in quiet, notice how you feel physically, emotionally and spiritually.
- Everyday find a common object and look at it from different perspectives. Think about what it's made of, how it came to be, who created it and what its purpose is. This will spark your innate curiosity and wonder.

### QUOTE

**"In order to feel real peace with ourselves,  
we have no other home except the present."**

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Remember the last time you had the flu? Your body ached, yes—but your mind was likely also a little cloudy, as the health of our minds is interconnected with our bodies. Likewise, our bodies are interconnected with our spirit. If you study the life of any Olympian you will see that physical performance is always tied to the state of their spirit: their motivation, their mood, and their beliefs.

In order to thrive, all three levels of our being—physical, mental, and spiritual—need to thrive in conjunction. They need to be integrated. But in order for them to operate well, they first all must be maintained. We need to find a balance within ourselves that works for all three parts.

At some point or another, we all find ourselves struggling in one of these areas. We've run our bodies into the ground, we rolled our minds around in dirt, or maybe we've neglected our spiritual needs. Then, if we're like most, we find distractions: cheap substitutes for our hearts' real desire. These distractions are easy to spot because they only give us temporary pleasure or relief, but leave us feeling worse than when we started. These placebos take many forms and are as unique as each of us.

We see this pattern most clearly in addiction—the cyclical compulsion to do the things we know aren't in our best interest. But, even if we're not clinically addicted, this lack of balance leads us to a distracted life, robbed of real freedom—as we continually turn away from our deepest sources of well-being and peace.

So how do we get past this? When we start operating with an awareness of how our mind, body, and soul interact—we will discover what parts of us need to be strengthened, fixed, or even disinfected. Through integration, one focused effort will influence all three parts. The more aware we are of the need for balance, the more we experience a deep interconnectedness within ourselves.

#### WAYS TO INCORPORATE THIS PRINCIPLE

##### THEMES

✓ Moderation ✓ Healing ✓ Consume what nourishes (mind, body, spirit)

##### HABITS

- Write down an area of your life where you feel stuck or struggling. Everyday **write down** a change you could make in your life that could help you in that area. At the end of a month decide what action steps you want to make.
- At the end of the day, **consider** the media you've consumed. Which helped contribute to you being healthier in mind, body or spirit? What got in the way of you being healthy in mind, body, or spirit?
- We need adequate **rest**. Set a standard bedtime and wake time and do everything you can to stick with it.

#### QUOTE

**"These distractions are easy to spot because they only give us temporary pleasure or relief, but leave us feeling worse than when we started."**

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At first glance, transcendence might look like the ultimate culmination of all the other nine principles—the prize you receive after checking off all the others in chronological order. But transcendence isn't an outcome, it is a means. Our ability to connect with the Divine is innately within each of us, has always been within us, and, is what allows us to master the other principles. It quietly supports us, and guides us to greater perspective and understanding. It is the ground upon which all the other principles stand.

No matter your religious tradition or lack thereof, all spiritual paths agree on this central premise: there is something far, far bigger than our individual selves. Our common ancestors designed languages, developed ceremonies, and built their experience of life around these beliefs. What they've left is inspiring, albeit, imperfect language to help us understand this world that we live and breath in.

Transcendence goes far beyond analysis. In our post-enlightenment world we tend to emphasize truth in forms that are easily judged, measured and clarified, as if the world was one giant science experiment and we just need to spend enough time with the data. But deeper meaning resides outside this world of measurement. The world of transcendence is the world in which the great poets, musicians, authors and spiritual leaders reside. It's the world of the visionary, the healer and the mystic. And when you call to mind the people in your life who have set the greatest example of what it means to be human, they likely spent much of their time in the world of transcendence.

In a world that praises and rewards grandiose individualism, touching the transcendent can be an excruciatingly humbling experience. Yet, it is the ultimate source of meaning, viewing life from its biggest and deepest endpoint. It's only through engaging the transcendent, our Higher Power — God, where we find love, ourselves, our purpose, and therefore, our freedom.

## WAYS TO INCORPORATE THIS PRINCIPLE

### THEMES

✓ Love    ✓ Nature    ✓ Tradition and Ancestry

### HABITS

- Maintain an awareness of the **big picture**. Every time you're faced with a decision, think about how you would feel about it at the end of your life looking back.
- Each day for a month write down one word you would use to **describe God**. At the end of the month prioritize the words based upon what resonates most deeply for you. Mark next to the words T for what you know to be true, E for what you need to explore, and B for what you think may just be baggage.
- Consider your family's traditions and your spiritual upbringing. Find a daily or weekly **tradition** that you left behind and try practicing it for a month. Explore the roots of this principle and try to enter more deeply into its intention.

### QUOTE

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