

Essentialism Podcast with Greg McKeown

Interviewed by April and Eric Perry, LearnDoBecome.com

Here is a basic outline of the interview, with time references included in each heading. We encourage you to add your own notes from the Podcast below, and please share this and the resources at LearnDoBecome with your friends and family! The full audio can be found at [LearnDoBecome.com/episode12](https://www.learnodobecome.com/episode12). Enjoy!

Introduction, Explaining the Vision: @1-7 Minutes

- Birth to death thinking isn't nearly long enough. *Start* with what you learned from your grandparents and parents. Then consider your life goals (birth to death), but don't stop there.
- Think about your children, your grandchildren, and then 25 years *after* you pass away.
- At that point, your descendents (or the younger people you've influenced) will be considering what they learned from *you*.
- You will realize your life is *not* about you. *That* kind of longevity starts to move people.
- Great question to consider: How will we benefit the lives that come *after* our lives? What is our 100-year vision?
- There's something about breaking the bounds of your own life. *Deeply motivational*, not depressing. You shape things for your choices that go on for a long time.
- It's not *whether* you make a difference; it's what kind of difference you make.
- This 100-year vision strips away the nonsense of nonessentialism.
- The long-term view shows you most things are not important. Only a few things last for a long time.

The Quarterly Offsite and Planning Your Day: @9 Minutes

- Schedule a personally quarterly offsite to take on the big picture/important questions. (Maybe schedule four at a time for the whole year!)

- During this quarterly offsite, you ask, “What is my 100-year vision and what do I want to contribute?” It’s going to look like rubbish at first. (Don’t worry about that!)
- Pixar creates beautiful movies, but they say, “Every idea starts with ugly babies.” You have to have the courage to be rubbish.
- *Nobody* regrets doing this quarterly offsite. We may not want to face how lost we are... but this is critical. (There are two groups in this world: Those who are lost, and those who *know* they are lost.)
- It may help to simply end your quarterly offsite with a 3x5 card featuring 3-5 things you want your grandkids to know about you.
- The main message is this: “Do not let other people determine your life for you.”
- The most important question is, “What’s important *now*? What do I do today?” List essential 6 priorities, and then cross off the bottom 5. (Not for good...) If you’ve done the thinking well, you’ll see the top item is twice as important as the second, which is twice as important as the third. It’s called the “Power Law.” This is so much better than doing 20 things that never made it onto the list.

Journal Writing: @15 Minutes

- Journal writing is one of the most satisfying elements of Greg’s life. He hasn’t missed a day in 5 years, and has barely missed a day in 10 years.
- Question to consider: “How much of your life is left in a clear form?” Death leaves so little behind.
- Greg compares his two grandpas – one who left nothing (no record) and one who left a journal containing one sentence for every day. He has *such* a better understanding of his grandfather who left the record.
- What medium do we use? Paper will be around. Digital decay is really strong and Greg considers a paper version to be much better.
- You can access it and pass it on... paper has stood the test of time, and writing on paper can’t distract you.
- Celebrate progress in your journal, prioritize, and then look at it during your quarterly offsite.
- 3 questions to record in your journal during your quarterly offsite
 - What has happened?
 - So what?
 - Now what?

- Counterintuitive rule – only write one sentence. Do *less* than you feel motivated to do. That one sentence could be about gratitude or something you learned.
- If you can keep yourself small, doing less than you think you're able to, you increase the chance of sustainability. That has so much greater value than people appreciate.

Essentialism is Counter-Culture: @26 Minutes

- Our current culture says, "I'm too busy living to think about life." (Do you want to live for a decade like that?)
- GREAT read from Seneca (and don't be intimidated because it's Seneca): "On the Shortness of Life - Life is long if you know how to use it."
- Life is only too short if we are consumed with nonessentials.
- The "normal life" is NOTHING like what we are talking about.
- "Normal" today is being stretched too thin, or being busy, but not productive. You feel like others' agendas hijack the day. You're running constantly, saying yes without thinking about it, and then regretting it afterwards.
- We need TINY adjustments that tilt the trajectory of our lives.

How Does Essentialism Strengthen a Marriage and a Family? @30 Minutes

- Consider this: "What is the cost of *nonessentialism* on a marriage and family?" Greg shares a decision he made to be at a client meeting instead of at the hospital with his wife and their new baby. He had made a fool's bargain.
- If you don't prioritize your life, someone else will.
- We must create space on our calendars to *think* about these things.
- We *can* push aside the nonessential life.

The Core of Essentialism: @36 Minutes

- (1) Identify what is essential.
- (2) Eliminate what is not.
- (3) Create a system for *executing* what's most important as effortlessly as possible.

- Greg shares an example of how he goes surfing one afternoon a week with his children. (That kind of an activity doesn't just "happen" for anyone....)

The Hardest Work of Essentialism: @37 Minutes

- The hardest work is answering this question: How do you deconstruct the nonessentialism?
- Sometimes we have to get creative.
- An example of this is the Miracle Music Game (Greg explains how it works with his children!)
- The goal is to use your energy and discipline in a different way. This is *not* about willpower. We need to build systems.

So Where Do We Start? @42 Minutes

- Be gentle. Perfectionism is a counterfeit. Essentialism is a journey, and we'll be off track 90% of the time.
- "Each day is a prototype for living a life that matters." We get to try over and over.
- Our culture says, "You have to do it all. Perfectly. Now. Not even now. In fact, you have to do it yesterday."
- Those thoughts can beat you up.
- But there's a better way to live, and that's living like an *Essentialist*.

Learn more about Greg and *Essentialism* at GregMcKeown.com.

And please visit us often at LearnDoBecome.com.

- April and Eric