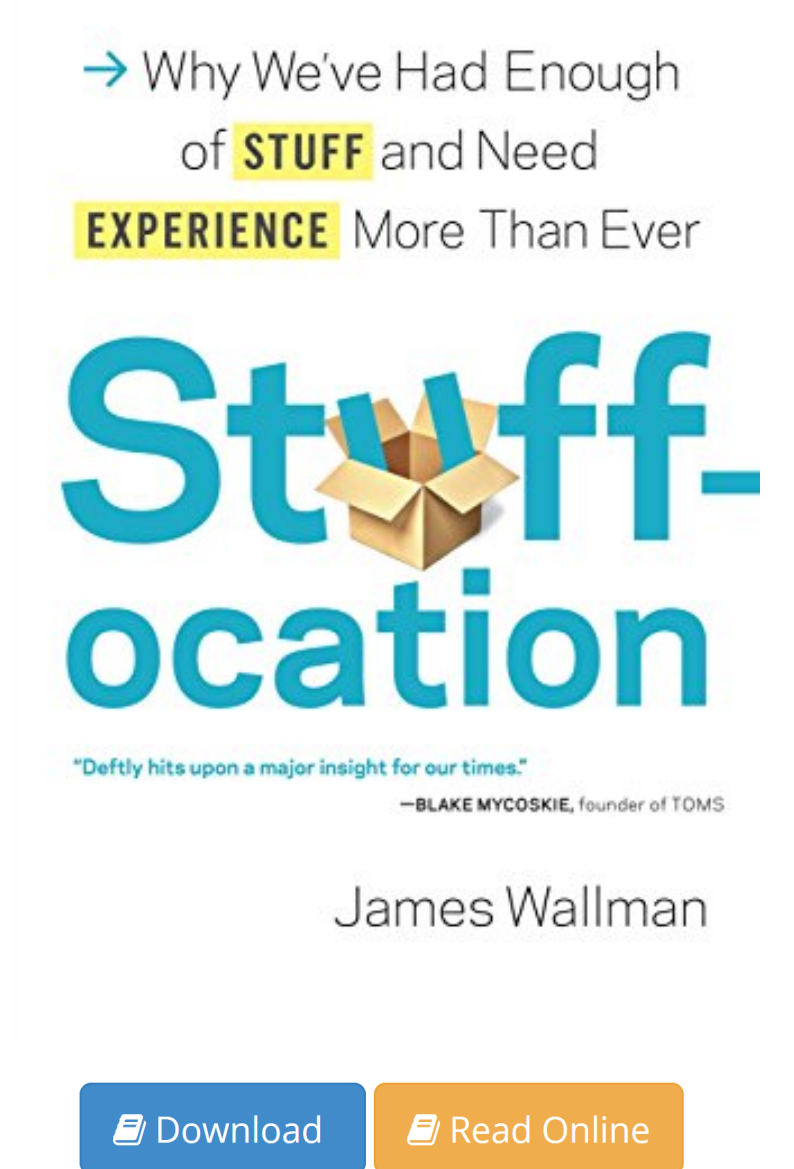


(Download ebook) Stuffocation: Why We've Had Enough of Stuff and Need Experience More Than Ever

Stuffocation: Why We've Had Enough of Stuff and Need Experience More Than Ever

James Wallman

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James Wallman : Stuffocation: Why We've Had Enough of Stuff and Need Experience More Than Ever before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Stuffocation: Why We've Had Enough of Stuff and Need Experience More Than Ever:

106 of 110 people found the following review helpful. Experiences won't make you any happier than stuffBy RepunzelUnlike other books I've read rejecting the materialism of modern culture, this book does not recommend minimalism, simple living, or finding work/family balance. Instead, it promotes the idea that we need to spend our

money on experiences instead of physical items, unless those physical items are required for an experience (ie skis, kayaks, climbing equipment, fishing poles, golf clubs, etc.) Apparently, sporting goods are fine things to collect as long as they are getting used. If they sit in your garage collecting dust, then you may suffer from "Stuffocation." According to Wallman, in order to be happy and fulfilled, you need to spend your resources on experiences, not stuff. While I found Wallman's ideas more realistic than those that suggest reducing my worldly possessions to a random number or limiting the clothes in my wardrobe to less than my age, I don't know that pursuing experiences will make a person any happier than pursuing stuff. The reason? The best experience, the ones that give life joy and meaning, aren't bought and sold. Hiking along the river with my kids is free, as is cuddling with them on a couch reading a book. We can play Frisbee in the park or sing songs of worship in a church. None of those things cost a penny. While I agree experience trumps stuff, it is relationship that trumps them both. Friendships require the investment of energy and time, not money, so it isn't something that can be measured in economic terms. Our economy is changing from mere material to experiential, but neither economy will bring happiness. To suggest otherwise is foolish.

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Great book
By Tami R. This is a great book that everyone should read. The beginning to middle of the book was the best part. The end does get a bit repetitive and too much into politics of consumerism but the overall message is great. After you read this you will want to get rid of your stuff and just keep what you need! A great book to follow up with this one is *The Magic of Tidying Up* which will help you decide HOW to go through and declutter and destuffify your life.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. and to be happy in the 21st century - you
By WR Knowlton I was first introduced to James Wallman during a radio interview on Radio West (aired on Utah's NPR station) a few weeks ago - and I found his arguments persuasive and interesting. I agree with his concluding paragraph, "We have got enough, and we have had enough of stuff. We are realizing that, to live a life that is meaningful, to shake our tail feathers, and to be happy in the 21st century - you, me, and society in general - we all need experience more than ever."

Stuffocation is a movement manifesto for "experiential" living, a call to arms to stop accumulating stuff and start accumulating experiences, and a road map for a new way forward with the potential to transform our lives. Reject materialism. Embrace experientialism. Live more with less.

Stuffocation is one of the most pressing problems of the twenty-first century. We have more stuff than we could ever need, and it isn't making us happier. It's bad for the planet. It's cluttering up our homes. It's making us stressed—and it might even be killing us.

A rising number of us are already turning our backs on all-you-can-get consumption. We are choosing access over ownership, and taking our business to companies like Zipcar, Spotify, and Netflix. Fed up with materialism, we are ready for a new way forward.

Trend forecaster James Wallman traces our obsession with stuff back to the original *Mad Men*, who first created desire through advertising. He interviews anthropologists studying the clutter crisis, economists searching for new ways of measuring progress, and psychologists who link stuffocation to declining well-being. And he introduces us to the innovators who are already living more consciously and with more meaning by choosing experience over stuff.

Experientialism does not mean giving up all of our possessions. It is a solution that is less extreme but equally fundamental. It's about transforming what we value. Stuffocation is a paradigm-shifting look at our habits and an inspiring call for living more with less. It's the one important book you won't be able to live without.

Praise for *Stuffocation*

"The revelations come fast and furious as he asserts that acquiring 'stuff' is often just an easy way to ignore the tougher questions of life, dodging 'why am I here?' and 'how should I live?' for 'will that go with the top I bought last week?' Tart and often funny . . . [Stuffocation] will be an eye-opener for those long persuaded that more is better. A scintillating read that will provoke conversation (or at least closet cleaning)." —Booklist

James Wallman deftly hits upon a major insight for our times: that acquiring 'stuff' and 'things' is not nearly as meaningful as collecting experiences. Some of the happiest days of my life were when I had nothing and lived on a houseboat. Without stuff to tie me down, I felt completely free." —Blake Mycoskie, founder of TOMS and author of the New York Times bestseller *Start Something That Matters*

"An absolute must-read . . . We think that more stuff will make us happier, but as the book nicely shows, we're just plain wrong. A great mix of stories and science, *Stuffocation* reveals the downside of more, and what we can do about it." —Jonah Berger, author of the New York Times bestseller *Contagious*

Wallman offers a deeply important message by weaving contemporary social science into very engaging stories. Reading the book is such a pleasure that you hardly recognize yourself: you're being told that you should change how you live your life." —Barry Schwartz, author of *The Paradox of Choice*

"With a sociologist's eye and a storyteller's ear, Wallman takes us on a tour of today's experience economy from the perspective not of businesses, nor even of consumers per se, but of everyday people." —B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, authors of *The Experience Economy*

From the Hardcover edition.

"The revelations come fast and furious as he asserts that acquiring 'stuff' is often just an easy way to ignore the tougher questions of life, dodging 'why am I here?' and 'how should I live?' for

Isquo;will that go with the top I bought last week?rsquo; Tart and often funny . . . [Stuffocation] will be an eye-opener for those long ago persuaded that more is better. A scintillating read that will provoke conversation (or at least closet cleaning).rdquo;mdash;Booklistldquo;James Wallman deftly hits upon a major insight for our times: that acquiring Isquo;stuffsquo; and Isquo;thingsrsquo; is not nearly as meaningful as collecting experiences. Some of the happiest days of my life were when I had nothing and lived on a houseboat. Without stuff to tie me down, I felt completely free.rdquo;mdash;Blake Mycoskie, founder of TOMS and author of the New York Times bestseller Start Something That Matters nbsp; ldquo;Stuffocation is a must-read. We think that more stuff will make us happier, but as the book nicely shows, wersquo;re just plain wrong. A great mix of stories and science, Stuffocation reveals the downside of more, and what we can do about it.rdquo;mdash;Jonah Berger, author of the New York Times bestseller Contagious nbsp; ldquo;In Stuffocation, James Wallman offers a deeply important message by weaving contemporary social science into very engaging stories. Reading the book is such a pleasure that you hardly recognize yoursquo;re being told that you should change how you live your life.rdquo;mdash;Barry Schwartz, author of The Paradox of Choice nbsp; ldquo;With a sociologistsquo;s eye and a storytellersquo;s ear, James Wallman takes us on a tour of todayrsquo;s experience economy from the perspective not of businesses, nor even of consumers per se, but of everyday people. In doing so, he identifies the rise of a new value system among those who are consciously replacing materialism with what he rightly calls experientialism. Spot on.rdquo;mdash;B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, authors of The Experience Economy nbsp; ldquo;Stuffocation explains how less but better stuff and space can lead to more time, more experiences, more connecting with people, and therefore more happiness. Designed right, small is the new big.rdquo;mdash;Graham Hill, founder, LifeEdited.com and TreeHugger.comAbout the AuthorJames Wallman is a trend forecaster, journalist, and speaker who has written for The New York Times, GQ, Fast Company, and the Financial Times. His clients include Absolut, BMW, Burberry, and Nike. He has an MA in classics from Oxford University and an MA in journalism from the University of the Arts London. He has lived in France, Greece, and Palo Alto, California, and currently lives in London with his wife and two children.Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.lThe Anthropologist and the Clutter CrisisSometime in the summer of 2000, there was a knock on the door of Jeanne Arnoldsquo;s office. It was most likely one of her doctoral candidates or grad students, come to ask her about methodology or whether an inference they were making about some evidence they had brought back from a dig sounded reasonable. In those days, Arnoldsquo;s salt-shy;and-shy;pepper hair was swept up and back in a bouffant style that ended somewhere around her shoulders. The glasses she wore had oversized, 1980s-shy;style metal frames. She looked up from her research, and smiled when she saw Elinor Ochs, one of her colleagues at the University of California, Los Angeles. ldquo;Got a minute, Jeanne?rdquo; Ochs askedmdash;shy;when what she really meant was, ldquo;Have you got ten years?rdquo;Ochs was putting together a bid for a project, she explained. Would Arnold be interested in working with her on it? She was gathering a team to document life in the twenty-shy;first century. They would use the same methods as anthropologists studying tribes in Africa, or archaeologists analyzing a dead civilizationrsquo;s remains, like Inca ruins in South Americamdash;shy;except they would be doing the work right there in Los Angeles, with case studies who were very much still alive. The study would be the first of its kind. Well, there had been one or two studies a bit like it before, like one in New York that looked at the art people bought. But there had never been a study as ambitious as this. Instead of trying to understand people through one aspect of their lives, the plan was to record as much of their lives as possible, to create the definitive record of how people were living in the early part of the twenty-shy;first century. The project, Ochs said, could really use a material culture expert like Jeanne. Arnold was not sure though. It sounded exciting, like it might be groundbreaking, but this wasnrsquo;t really her field.Arnoldsquo;s specialty was the past, not the present. That had been her passion ever since she had gotten the bug as a little girl. Back then, she had spent her long summer holidays in the woods by her home near the Great Lakes, digging up crinoids and leaf fossils and arrowheads. ldquo;They were only little,rdquo; Arnold recalls. ldquo;Nothing a real paleontologist or archaeologist would be interested in.rdquo;They were a start though. And as Arnold grew, so did her interest in the ancient past, especially archaeology, and its sister discipline, anthropology. She studied them at summer camp, at the local university, and then at the University of California. That is where, in 1980, she stumbled across her lifersquo;s workmdash;shy;a native tribe called the Chumash and their old home on Santa Cruz, one of the Channel Islands off the coast of California.When Arnold talks about the Chumash sites now, you can almost see her arriving on Santa Cruz those thirty-odd years ago. She would have just stepped off the navy supply boat. It was the only way to reach the island back then. It went once a week. The wind would have been blowing her brown hair around as she walked up the green hill to the site. There, she would have walked around wearing dark sunglasses, reading the landscape the way only an archaeologist could. Where you or I would have only seen dips in the ground, she saw the footprints of real people, and hints of where the Chumash had sited their pole and thatched huts. If you or I had ferreted around in the ground, we might have found some old fish bones. ldquo;A Chumash toss zone,rdquo; Arnold would say. ldquo;They werenrsquo;t bothered about mess. After theirsquo;d eaten, they just threw them on the ground.rdquo; If we had kept looking we might have found, even up here, far from the sea, shell remains and the beginnings of beads. That is when Arnold would have asked us to stop. Those remains were for the professionals. With those, and many more like them, she could understand how the Chumash lived, what mattered to

them, and how their society was structured. After more than a decade of gathering and analyzing Chumash artifacts, Arnold realized she was not only excavating a site, she was building a case. Until the late twentieth century, the conventional wisdom had been that complex societies, in which there is an established hierarchy of a ruling elite and bureaucrats, had only emerged from agricultural communities—like Egypt under the pharaohs, for instance. But as the years went by and the evidence stacked up, Arnold became convinced that the Chumash—who hunted, gathered, and fished, but did not farm—had also lived in a complex society called a chiefdom. “That meant,” Arnold will tell you now, “that a society didn’t have to be agricultural for complex systems to emerge.” In other words, as Arnold’s work helped prove, the conventional wisdom was wrong, and it had to be replaced with a new theory that reflected the new evidence. “There are a few grumpy old men out there who still say they’re not persuaded,” Arnold admits. “But they’re slowly disappearing.” Arnold was the sort of person who was not afraid of confronting the conventional wisdom when it no longer accurately reflected the evidence. No wonder Ochs wanted someone like her on the team. After a few days, Arnold said she was in. Then she and the rest of Ochs’s team at the Center on the Everyday Lives of Families (CELf)—anthropologists, archaeologists, ethnographers, photographers, and psychologists—worked out a methodology, and got approval and the funds they needed. In 2000, the team set to work, and soon found themselves in the middle of a clutter crisis of epidemic proportions. The Middle-Class Clutter Crisis With funding and methodology established, the CELf team began the next task: finding some families who were willing to open their lives to scientific inquiry—average, middle-class ones who were typical of households everywhere, and thirty-two of them. Once they had found them, explained what the commitment would mean to their lives, and what it would mean for social scientists who wanted to understand life at the turn of the twenty-first century, they began. They noted the makeup of their households, the size of their homes, what jobs they did. Each family had at least one child aged between seven and twelve. Their homes ranged from 980 to 3,000 square feet. The professions of the parents included teachers and lawyers, dentists and businesspeople, an airline pilot and a firefighter. Ochs’s team drew up plans of their homes. They photographed them—their bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens, living rooms, playrooms, second bathrooms, garages, gardens. They came early. They stayed late. They asked questions. They stayed silent. But they never stopped taking notes—of where their case studies went, what they did, when they ate, what they ate. They were like flies on the wall or spy drones in the air, always there. They were the ultimate voyeurs, granted special permission to access all areas of their case studies’ homes. And even when the scientists were not there, they found another way in. They gave the families video cameras to record their own home video diaries. Sometimes it got to be too much—for the scientists at least. Once, when one family was having a heated argument, the researcher who was following them around could not cope and had to go outside. But rather than stop recording what was happening, he carried on watching through the window of the family’s bungalow. When the people inside—still arguing—moved to another room, he moved too. He stepped round the house and stood outside that room’s window, still watching, still making notes. As well as observing, Ochs’s team did a lot of counting. Since they knew many counts would run to the thousands, they decided to use a set of counting rules devised especially for the project by someone who had gathered and counted and analyzed hundreds of thousands of artifacts for more than two decades—Jeanne Arnold. The aim of Arnold’s rules was to help the counters all count the same way, and create verifiable, scientifically valid results. The first rule was that they would not look in cupboards or cabinets. They would only count what was visible. Arnold’s second rule was to count not in the case studies’ homes but only from photographs—in case someone asked a question and put the counter off, in case the counter just forgot what number she or he had reached, and so they could double-check the counting later. They would paste the photos together carefully to avoid double counting. Then they would begin: How many paintings? How many computers? How many chairs? And then they would tally up all the different categories. CELf’s researchers gathered a vast amount of data. They spent four years collecting it, and seven analyzing it. “It took that long to describe and digitize everything,” Arnold will tell you, “and to work out what on earth was going on.” In all there were four terabytes of data, which is 4,000,000,000,000 pieces of information. The families made forty-seven hours of their own home video tours. Ochs’s team shot 1,540 hours of videotape. They took 19,987 photos. And they counted a ton of stuff. As the years went by and the mountains of evidence grew, some of the numbers and the observations, to tell the truth, shocked the researchers. They were amazed at how little time adults were spending outside in their gardens—less than fifteen minutes per week on average, even though they had often spent a lot of money on fancy barbecues and outdoor dining sets. They were surprised at how child-centric the houses were. Thirty-one of the thirty-two homes had things on display in the living room—like plaques, ribbons, trophies, certificates, and beauty contest tiaras—that showed off how well the kids were doing. They were, to be brutally honest, gobsmacked at what they saw some of the kids getting away with. One time, for instance, a mother told her little girl and little boy she had to make a conference call. It wouldn’t take long, she said, but it was an important call with some important people at work. Could they keep it down for a few minutes? Then, moments after she had taken the call, as if on cue, her son started banging his drums and her daughter started playing her trumpet—both as loud as they could. Above all, though, the

researchers were astounded by how much stuff people had. The smallest home in the study, for instance, a house of 980 square feet, contained, in the two bedrooms and living room alone, 2,260 items. That count, remember, was only of the things that were visible. That did not include any of the stuff that was tucked into drawers or squeezed into cupboards. The other homes were similarly packed. On average, each of the families had 39 pairs of shoes, 90 DVDs or videos, 139 toys, 212 CDs, and 438 books and magazines. Nine out of ten of them had so many things that they kept household stuff in the garage. Three quarters of them had so much stuff in there, there was no room left for the things that their garages were originally designed for—cars. These families, these typical middle-class families, no doubt, have a lot of stuff. But when you think about it, a lot does not necessarily mean clutter. A lot of things could be a collection, like a set of books, records, CDs, clothes, or even toys that are tidily arranged, perhaps color-coded or neatly folded, or in height or alphabetical order. As well as being a lot of things, there are two further requirements, Arnold says, before you can call a group of objects clutter. Those are that the things should be messy, and they should be in the wrong place, like toys strewn all across the house, from the living room to the bathroom, and down the hallway and in the garage. This—lots of stuff, in a mess, out of place—is what the CELF researchers found time and again in the homes of their case studies, and it is what they think is happening in middle-class homes today. Their research, the most extensive piece of work of its kind ever to be conducted, has led the CELF researchers to believe, as they wrote in the final report, *Life at Home in the Twenty-first Century*, that because of the “sheer numbers of artifacts” people today own, and because we are living in “the most materially rich society in global history, with light-years more possessions per average family than any preceding society,” we are at a crunch point. We are at a point of “material saturation.” We are coping with “extraordinary clutter.” We, as individuals and as a society, are facing a “clutter crisis.” There are caveats, of course, to the study and these conclusions. Can we really take thirty-two case studies in Los Angeles, for instance, and generalize for all middle-class families in the United States? These case studies were chosen because they are average middle-class people, with typical jobs, incomes, home sizes, and family structures. They were picked because what goes on in their lives and homes reflects what others do. The CELF team spent months finding them and chose them for those reasons. So it is not only feasible but sensible to generalize for all middle-class families—in the United States, at least. The clutter crises in other countries will be different, of course. But even if you think the Americans would “win” the clutter crisis, or at least elements of it, I am sure, as with the take-up of materialistic consumerism in the first place, the rest of the post-industrialized world is not far behind. Consider the homes and lives of people in Britain, France, Japan, Germany, Australia, Hong Kong, and Singapore, or any other developed country. Think of your own home and life, and those of the people you know. Is there lots of stuff? Spilling out? Messy? Are things in the wrong place? Would you ever call it “cluttered”? Do the kids have too many toys? What, would you say, are the average household counts for shoes, DVDs, and books and magazines? Is there any room left for cars in the garage? Not everyone in the world, clearly, is at the mercy of this clutter crisis. There are hundreds of millions who do not have enough, and would love to have the problem of too much. But then, today, thanks to our materialistic culture, there are also many millions with far too much, who are running out of cupboards and cabinets and wardrobes and even space in the garage to store it all. The clutter crisis, when you think about it, is likely to be worst in the U.S., where materialistic consumption began and is more fully developed than most other places. But the problem of too much stuff is not only an American problem. There is a global, rich-world, middle-class clutter crisis.