



What Kids Taught Me About Creativity

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I used to own a Leica M system that cost more than many people's cars. Rooms filled with synthesizers. Audio interfaces that captured sounds I genuinely cared about. I made [beautiful photographs](#), created [music](#) that moved people, built a real creative practice that brought me deep satisfaction.

I cared deeply about these objects. I was an artist, and these were my instruments. They felt sacred to me.

But then I had children, and everything I thought I knew about the sacred was wrong.

When Time Was Infinite

Without kids (without real responsibility), I could afford to optimize for the theoretical rather than the practical.

| Time was a luxury I didn't realize I had until it was gone.

I could spend months researching the perfect camera, the ideal synthesizer, the most elegant cable management system. Time was infinite, money felt renewable, and the gap between "having the right tools" and "actually creating something" remained conveniently invisible.

Children have a way of burning away these comfortable delusions. They force you to confront what's actually sacred.

The letting go happened gradually, driven first by financial necessity but revealing something deeper. That Leica system that I'd convinced myself was crucial for my photography? Gone, sold during a period of unemployment. The modular synth setup I'd spent years building, piece by precious piece? Bit by bit, I let go of everything I thought mattered most to me.

Each sale felt like loss at first. Then relief. Then something approaching grace.

The Best Camera

The reality of having children changed everything about how I approached tools. There's an old photography adage: "The best camera is the one you have with you." I always knew this was true, but I can't carry a camera around kids - they'd break it.

My iPhone captures [moments with my family](#) that my expensive cameras never could. Not because of technical superiority, but because it's always there, always ready, never creating friction between me and the sacred ordinary.

Friction kills more moments than poor image quality ever will.

No lens choices to agonize over. No settings to optimize. Just presence, witnessed. (Though I'm heavily annoyed with Apple's new camera button, which is mostly just an AI button in disguise.)

The photographs are different now. Less technically perfect - in a very serious way - but more emotionally honest. They're very hard to frame correctly, but the imperfection feels more human somehow, like breathing room for the soul.

Mental Bandwidth

But it wasn't just about the physical tools. What I didn't expect was how much mental space the gear had been occupying. Not just the physical storage, but the cognitive overhead. Maintenance schedules. Firmware updates. The constant

low-level anxiety about protecting expensive, delicate things. Researching insurance policies I never actually bought. Upgrade paths. Editing and organizing photos.

Each piece of equipment was a small subscription to complexity I hadn't realized I was paying.

When you have young children, every unit of attention becomes sacred. Every simplification creates space for what actually matters: being present, noticing when someone needs a hug, maintaining the patience required for small souls learning to navigate the world.

This connects directly to what I've called [Spirituality 2.0 for Humans™](#) - the practice of focusing on absolute basics. I eat, I breathe, I die. I love my family. Everything else is optional complexity.

The iPad Experiment

The ultimate test of this philosophy came when I sold my laptop entirely and committed to an iPad Pro as my only computer. This felt radical, almost reckless. Could I maintain my technical practice on a device designed for consumption rather than creation?

For months, it worked beautifully in theory. But the reality was different: I became primarily a consumer rather than a creator. The constraints that I thought would force creativity actually made creation harder.

I spent more time reading about productivity than being productive.

I found myself reading more, watching more, scrolling more - but writing less, coding less, making less.

I eventually bought another laptop - some problems genuinely need the full power of traditional computing. But the experiment taught me something crucial: most of what I thought was "necessary" was actually optional complexity masquerading as productivity.

What Remains

So what's left after all this letting go?

My current setup: a backpack, a laptop, an iPhone, a Nintendo Switch. That's it. No camera bag to maintain, no music studio to manage, no cable spaghetti to untangle. When I want to make music, I use software. When I want to capture images, I use what's in my pocket. When I want to relax, I have a simple gaming device that doesn't require system administration.

The Switch is particularly perfect for this philosophy - it's designed around the idea that games should be accessible, immediate, joyful. No lengthy setup processes, no hardware compatibility matrices to navigate. Pure play, which might be the most spiritual activity there is.

The Liberation of Enough

This simplicity revealed something important.

This isn't about minimalism as aesthetic choice or financial necessity (although that constraint applies). It's about what actually matters. It's about recognizing that creative tools can become spiritual obstacles. That optimization can become procrastination. That the perfect setup is often the enemy of actual creation.

My children don't care about my camera specs. They care whether I'm present for their stories, whether I notice their drawings, whether I'm available when they need connection. The iPhone captures those moments just fine. Better than fine - it captures them without getting in the way.

Looking back, I can see how this physical simplification mirrors the [mental health debugging](#) practices that have become essential to my wellbeing. Fewer variables to manage. Fewer things that can break. More focus on what actually works.

The gear was never the point. The creativity was always in the consciousness, not the tools. The music was always in the intention and practice of playing, not the equipment itself. The photography was always about seeing, not capturing.

What I discovered is that true creative practice is spiritual practice. It's about presence, attention, devotion to the moment in front of you. The tools either serve that devotion or they don't.

Spiritual minimalism, for me, means optimizing for presence rather than possibility. It means choosing what serves awakening over what serves the ego's ideas about awakening. It means recognizing that sometimes the most sacred thing you can do is let go of what you thought you needed.

The best creative tool is the one that disappears, leaving only you and the divine ordinary. Everything else is just beautiful distraction from what's already here.

Nowadays

These days, I find myself thinking about different kinds of complexity - the algorithmic kind that shapes consciousness without our consent. I write about [the algorithm systematically eating virtue, devouring democracy, consuming language itself](#). I explore [mental health not being what we think it is](#) - not individual pathology but often the sane response to insane systems. I analyze [when values eat their young](#) - how institutions betray the very people they claim to protect.

The same principles that taught me to let go of expensive cameras apply to letting go of the attention economy's demands on consciousness. The gear was just practice for recognizing all the other things that masquerade as necessary but actually distance us from what's sacred. Now the question isn't just "what creative tools do I need?" but "what systems am I unconsciously feeding that eat away at human flourishing?"

The laptop, the iPhone, the Switch remain. But the real work these days is about protecting attention itself from algorithms designed to fragment it. Same spiritual practice, different scale.