

# A Musing

## Podcast Transcript

### 010 ▶ Subtraction

We're conditioned to see subtraction as a negative idea. There's a subconscious notion in most cases that if something is taken away, it's a loss. But.. could there be a different way of seeing that idea? Let's explore that.

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00:00:00.260 - 00:00:02.420

Welcome to A Musing.

00:00:02.420 - 00:00:03.620

I'm Diego.

00:00:07.860 - 00:00:10.340

Today's episode, Subtraction.

00:00:16.555 - 00:00:23.255

I have a few go-to things that I like to watch at night on YouTube when I'm winding down.

00:00:23.255 - 00:00:26.315

Woodturning videos are one of those things.

00:00:28.275 - 00:00:50.375

There's something about the way a jagged piece of wood, totally wild looking, is placed on the brackets and it's spun at such incredible speed that it looks like a solid shape as the woodworker starts to carve away, giving shape to something that looks ridiculously different from, you know, how it began.

00:00:51.775 - 00:00:57.495

Watching these videos, it relaxes me and it also makes me think.

00:00:58.595 - 00:01:12.475

Our society is shaped by some common mindsets that are difficult to even detect unless you step outside of your region of the world and into one that has fundamentally different ways of seeing life.

00:01:15.995 - 00:01:21.895

We are almost programmed to see life as a thing that we need to build.

00:01:21.895 - 00:01:28.355

So, you know, you were born and you have to acquire a certain amount of knowledge and skills so that you can then move on to college.

00:01:28.355 - 00:01:34.855

Then in college, we need to acquire a certain amount of credits and experience so as to move on to the next level.

00:01:34.895 - 00:01:37.595

Once we enter the workforce, we continue to build.

00:01:40.535 - 00:01:50.715

The more experience, the more years you are at a certain job, the more money you add to your salary, the more benefits, the more, the more, the more.

00:01:52.895 - 00:01:59.695

And this is the reason why people who go against that current are seen as odd.

00:01:59.695 - 00:02:03.835

We look at the tiny house movement, for instance, as a curiosity and oddity.

00:02:05.915 - 00:02:11.935

Same with minimalism, or someone who decides they don't want to have children, or don't want to get married.

00:02:11.935 - 00:02:18.575

If addition isn't happening, it appears as though we're going against a current.

00:02:22.315 - 00:02:26.635

It's like we live in a culture of addition and multiplication.

00:02:26.635 - 00:02:29.295

It's a manufacturing culture.

00:02:29.295 - 00:02:34.995

We have to put one piece along with another piece and another piece so that we can assemble a whole life.

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This is very typical of Western thought.

00:02:40.695 - 00:02:47.235

However, that's not how other cultures around the world envision life or the world itself for that matter.

00:02:59.375 - 00:03:08.035

What if we tried seeing life not as something to assemble, but rather something to subtract from, to get a desired outcome?

00:03:12.115 - 00:03:21.235

And I mean this in the sense that a carved sculpture is not something that is assembled, for instance.

00:03:21.235 - 00:03:28.035

But rather, the sculptor takes away from a block of something to arrive at a finished piece.

00:03:29.615 - 00:03:35.495

One could almost say that the sculpture was hiding inside the block of marble all along.

00:03:35.495 - 00:03:37.235

It just needed to be discovered.

00:03:42.633 - 00:03:56.593

In the same way, the solution to shaping your life or addressing a challenge that's in front of you might not be to add something, but rather discovering a solution or a path forward through subtraction.

00:03:59.753 - 00:04:03.813

The two approaches to problem solving are drastically different.

00:04:03.833 - 00:04:09.993

One can easily overwhelm you by making you feel paralyzed due to not knowing what to do next.

00:04:10.533 - 00:04:16.753

When you're supposed to add an element to a situation to solve it, you may not know what it is you're supposed to add.

00:04:16.753 - 00:04:18.853

But what if you subtract?

00:04:18.853 - 00:04:22.773

What if you discard from what's already in front of you?

00:04:25.653 - 00:04:29.413

Subtraction might seem like a step backwards at times.

00:04:29.413 - 00:04:42.053

It's just easier to add chocolates and flowers at that issue with your partner instead of sitting down to chip away at the problem together until you discover the underlying causes or triggers.

00:04:44.173 - 00:04:53.833

It's easier to add a family vacation to distract from the strife instead of having heart-to-hearts and carving out the conflict that's poisoning your family life.

00:05:09.438 - 00:05:14.498

The subtraction approach forces you to take ownership of what's in front of you.

00:05:14.498 - 00:05:18.058

The woodworker doesn't ignore the jagged piece of wood in front of her.

00:05:18.058 - 00:05:28.898

She sees it as what she's got to work with, and knows that inside the jaggedness and chaos, there's something beautiful and something worth carving towards.

00:05:39.489 - 00:05:49.629

Now, of course, if we're considering the idea of subtraction, then the question that comes to mind is, what to subtract?

00:05:57.596 - 00:06:16.796

Destructive Attitudes, Bad Habits, Resentment and Hatred, Possessions that don't bring value to your life, Money Wasting, Toxic Relationships, Guilt, Shame?

00:06:18.856 - 00:06:23.596

The factor that ends up being subtracted might be different for most of us.

00:06:23.596 - 00:06:31.596

However, the important first step is embracing this approach as a solution at all.

00:06:31.596 - 00:06:35.196

What will your life look like with less instead of more?

00:06:35.196 - 00:06:43.756

Less to account for, less to protect, less to clean, less to entertain, less to fix, less to feel heartache over.

00:06:49.746 - 00:06:51.966

Try this when you can.

00:06:51.966 - 00:06:57.206

Don't think of addition as the only way to obtain a result in one.

00:06:57.206 - 00:06:58.826

Look at nature.

00:06:58.826 - 00:07:04.406

All sorts of animals shed parts of themselves in order to survive and thrive.

00:07:04.406 - 00:07:10.226

Plant life is constantly shedding parts of itself to bloom and to give fruit.

00:07:10.226 - 00:07:20.906

And yet, here we are, adding more and more and more, weighing ourselves down, slowing ourselves down.

00:07:20.906 - 00:07:25.566

Pay attention to what life is trying to tell you.

00:07:25.566 - 00:07:29.466

Consider subtraction an option in your life.

00:07:29.466 - 00:07:31.686

It might just be the beginning of a renewal for you.

00:07:50.577 - 00:07:52.357

Let me know how it goes.

00:07:52.357 - 00:07:54.517

You can write me at [contactamusing@gmail.com](mailto:contactamusing@gmail.com).

00:07:58.257 - 00:08:02.237

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00:08:20.077 - 00:08:24.317

Catch you in the next episode for our season one finale.

00:08:26.117 - 00:08:26.677

Goodbye, friends.