

Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road
with Kyle Thacker

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We help the tiny house community
use their lower housing costs to
build financial independence.

With Laura Lynch



Full Episode Transcript

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Laura Lynch

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road with Kyle Thacker

Are you ready to break free from a conventional life and achieve financial independence through your version of tiny living, but you're feeling stuck trying to figure out the money part? Does the pressure to conform to societal norms make it even more difficult to embrace an unconventional lifestyle?

Well, you're in the right place.

I'm Laura Lynch, host of the Less House More Moola Podcast, where every Thursday, I'll bring you captivating interviews with individuals who have successfully made the transition to tiny living. They defied expectations and are thriving in their unique lives.

We'll also dive deep into industry resources to address common financial concerns on your tiny journey. Together, we'll explore the emotional and practical aspects of pursuing an alternative lifestyle. I'll describe a clear framework for project planning and cash flow management. Our goal is to intentionally build financial security and make a positive impact through our alternative American dream.

So, gear up for an exciting and empowering journey to create a life that truly resonates with you. Let's dive into today's episode and take the first steps towards financial independence and purpose through tiny living.

Laura Lynch: Well, hey, Kyle Thacker, imagine seeing you here. Welcome to Less House More Moola. Super excited to share your documentary with the Less House More Moola podcast audience.

It's a really beautiful and serendipitous world we live in. I'm like scrolling through LinkedIn, I got all my hashtags set up, and I came across your documentary that you were really creating a

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

lot of buzz around before it came out. And I'm like, "Oh my gosh, I got to make sure I catch that."

So, the weekend that it launched on YouTube, I sat down and watched the entire thing and thought, wow, this is a really amazing story and such an honest story. So, for some background, let's start with how did you come to the skoolie life?

Kyle Thacker: Yeah, well happy to be here. Thank you so much for inviting me on. What got me onto bus life really was a trip that I took with, at the time, my girlfriend, now my wife. But it was our first trip together to where we were like ... I think we were far enough along on the relationship, we were like, "Let's go do something together for a weekend."

And so, we went down to North Carolina just outside of Asheville. And I've always had this mantra of staying at tiny houses. I love tiny houses, which is unfortunate because I'm six five.

So, I think I was born in the wrong body, but I really loved staying in tiny houses. I just love like the creativity and that sort of thing. And so, we would stay in like tree houses and just different things.

And the one in North Carolina, one of the places that we stayed — we stayed in two or three tiny houses that trip, was like a fortnight trip. We did two in like just a typical tiny house. And then there was two nights with the bus, which was what inspired this entire thing.

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

So, that was a little Airbnb. Yeah, it was in a kind of a shorty school bus. And I remember walking in, and I thought it was like a fort that you'd imagine as a kid, but it's for adults to stay in.

And just the nerdy creative side of me just fell in love with it. I remember just like laughing at night. I was like, "We're in a fricking school bus right now. This is amazing." And that pretty much catapulted the entire journey for us really.

Laura Lynch: Yeah, that's so awesome. There was an old school bus on the land that I grew up on and-

Kyle Thacker: Really?

Laura Lynch: Yeah, it was just kind of parked back there, I don't know how long ago. And man, that really sparks your imagination. And I think so many of the folks I've talked to in tiny living really get inspired by some small living space or something in their childhood.

My grandfather built me a playhouse, which was actually quite a large barn building that he stored his tractor in, but it was my playhouse. And that really gets you sort of thinking in a really impressionable age. But yeah, definitely those wonderful Airbnbs that are out there these days give people opportunity to try out this lifestyle.

Kyle Thacker: Yeah, no, it's super cool.

Laura Lynch: Yeah. So, tell us, you went from there, you were in that Airbnb, and then you, and it's Naomi, right?

Kyle Thacker: Yes.

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

Laura Lynch: Yeah. So, you and Naomi decided to build out a bus. So, what was it about your normal life? Because you owned a home at that time, I believe, according to the documentary. So, what was it about your kind of normal path that wasn't working for you?

Kyle Thacker: I've always been a big advocate for this, and it's partly actually not by design, but it was in the documentary kind of the quote that I talk about, and I couldn't tell it to you verbatim right now.

But more or less, the kind of the quote and the philosophy that I live by now is that life has its ups and downs, and you can't anchor all of your emotions to the summit of something.

And so, I would accomplish something in my life that was important to me, and then I would expect to feel a certain way. And so, there's been very big moments in my life where I've accomplished something and then I'm not happy afterwards. And it was driving me kind of insane to a point where I'm like, I don't get it.

I'm putting all this effort into stuff that I'm doing, and it's like I think when I want to be here and then I get there, and then I'm not where I want to be at all, at least from a happiness standpoint.

So, it was for me getting to a point that it was happening so often over like a decade's worth of time, just bigger things that I was working on to where I realized something fundamentally was wrong with how I was approaching life.

And so, when I saved up all of my money, I was eating like PBJs for like, I don't know, a year and a half doing nothing after

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

work, just trying to save as much money as possible. I think I got like 10 grand or something like that. And I put all that money down on a house back when the housing market was somewhat decent as opposed to now.

But I was able to get a house. And that was like the moment that I realized that I was like this ... because I got the house and I was like, my gosh, I'm a homeowner, this is crazy. I feel so young, I don't feel like I should be here, but I have it.

And my sister was three years older than me, and she didn't have one. So, it was like the competitive brother-sister thing. But after just a few weeks, I was like, this doesn't mean anything. My day-to-day is not doing well.

And so, for me, doing the bus trip, it was almost like I was searching for something at the time. I think I had an idea of what happiness was and I just wanted to chase it. And so, the fundamental start of the trip and me going for it and building the bus with Naomi and going through that two-year arduous process of building that bus out, and then taking a huge chance — was really about staying the norm and doing what other people thought was good for me, and what was going to impress coworkers, family members, girlfriend, girlfriend's parents, all the things outside of myself.

I realized none of that was making me happy, and so I wanted to do it for me. And so, although it wouldn't make sense to anybody, I was just going to do it anyway. And then slowly throughout the documentary, you see that like it was about kind of the journey through it all.

It was about listening to my own intuition, listening to what makes me happy and not paying attention to the outside noise.

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

And I think that we're in a society ... I know we're in a society where we're like the validation of others is a huge thing, especially with the invention of social media.

So, I think being the generation that grew up with it and I think the millennials are like the OGs of social media. Because we grew up back in the Friendster and MySpace days and stuff. And it's just like that's been my entire life that I've known the social structure in that way.

And so, I disagree with it. I don't like social media. If I wasn't in tuned with a lot of the work I do and something that I need, then I wouldn't do it. But that was really the long story short, that's the start of why we went on the trip and why we did all this, was to start listening to our own intuition and not listening to others.

Laura Lynch: Yeah. And that's a theme that I hear from so many different people is that they just come to a point where they've done the thing that they think they're supposed to do, and they followed all the rules and they went and got the college degree and they bought the house or whatever.

And then they go, "Wow, this is not all that it is cracked up to be." And there's so many other parts of myself that I haven't figured out yet.

So, what a great way to sort of explore that in a way where ... and I know you and I touched on this when we talked a little bit before about certainly the cost of traveling and the bus aren't particularly low, but at least, you don't have a mortgage that you have to worry about every month.

Less House More Moola with Laura Lynch
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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road with Kyle Thacker

And so, maybe that gives you just a little bit more freeness at that moment to explore yourself and what's most important to you and reset your mindset for where you want to go next.

Kyle Thacker: Yeah, and I think it's important to acknowledge too that when we sold the houses at the height of the market during COVID, when it was going pretty high. And so, when we found out what we could make on the house, that gave us the insurance blanket that we needed.

So, I mean, it was a huge risk giving away everything that we own, selling the house and just going on this trip. It's like what if a month from now the bus blows up? Oh, I don't know.

And so, that was a huge factor in the whole thing. It was like, is this going to work? Is it not? But I think it's important to acknowledge all these like details because acting like this is a stress-free lifestyle or there's no risk involved or it's just very easy to accomplish ...

It's like, well, we had a house and we sold it, and we had a nice little nest egg in case things went wrong. And so, I think it's irresponsible for people on YouTube — and I see this a lot with van life and bus life and these types of things where you try to make it look as cool and easy breezy as possible, but there are a lot of ups and downs.

And so, you mentioned the honesty and vulnerability in the documentary, that was by design, because I didn't want to be a hypocrite of the things that I actually don't like.

It's irresponsible of me to project an image of what this is and make somebody else do the same thing or influence them do the same thing, and then they don't realize what they signed up

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road with Kyle Thacker

for because people are responsible for the message that they give to others.

And so, that was a big reason. And I want to be clear though, we had a house, we sold it, and we had a nest egg in case things went wrong. Luckily, we never had to do that. And so, it's not like it's a guaranteed financial disaster if you go out.

It wasn't for us. We actually finished our documentary/bus trip, we finished that and the entire trip was free. The entire trip was free from the profit we made on the bus when we sold it.

And so, from an economic standpoint, it worked out for us. But I want to be clear that for some people it's not. And that's just the way it goes. You got to be smart and hopefully, be strategic about how you do things and protect yourself. And don't just do something that's wildly irresponsible. Make sure that it's calculated and that you're going to be okay.

Laura Lynch: Yeah, I think that's a great point. And everything in life is about tradeoffs and sometimes, it seems like ... and this is kind of coming at you from left field here or as a contrary point. We feel like home ownership is so safe in some ways, but as we learn through the pandemic, it's very easy for people to-

Kyle Thacker: Yeah, agreed.

Laura Lynch: For your home to be a big risk too. And then you have all of your sort of eggs in that one basket, and you're having to take care of that really high housing cost that can create significant risk for folks too. So, breaking down in a skoolie is certainly a risk, but so is buying more house.

Kyle Thacker: No, but I actually, I agree. It's about mitigating risk. And so, what's a bigger risk? Owning a home and the general sense

Less House More Moola with Laura Lynch

<https://thetinyhouseadviser.com>

Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

of, especially now, I mean, I have a friend that just bought a house and I pray everything's okay.

But if it's not, I mean, that's a huge, huge, huge investment as opposed to buying a \$10,000 school bus and fixing it up. I mean, there's risk in everything, but there's definitely less risk in the tiny house movement because what we were doing was traveling every single day, and we were going on adventures and spending everything that we were making on the road as we worked.

And so, it wasn't about saving money, but it was also about like what's the worst that can happen? The bus blows up and we're still okay because it's not like our house.

Our house that was worth, I don't know, how many more times than what the bus was. It would be more painful if that happened. So yeah, I think there's just different ways to look at it for sure.

Laura Lynch: Yeah, for sure. Life is about risk and trade-offs and analyzing the risk reward potential on any particular action. And I think people don't necessarily think through the risks of home ownership and many other things because we just follow this default path.

And so, understanding that everything should be thought through and certainly taking off in a school bus and traveling and how that plays out in your job and all of that is interesting complexities that are different. And you have to think through those.

Less House More Moola with Laura Lynch
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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road with Kyle Thacker

So, one of the things that I like to, I guess promote, is the idea of build your own. Because I feel like that's where your biggest like bang for your buck sweat equity, confidence building.

My tiny house was built by my own two hands and my husband's too. And I feel like that building that tiny house taught me that I can pretty much do anything.

Kyle Thacker: Yeah.

Laura Lynch: Because you like one day at a time, you just go chip it away at that goal and it just teaches you about goal achievement. So, tell us, how did you figure out how to build your bus and where would you point others who are considering a DIY build?

Kyle Thacker: Yeah, great question. And I'm pretty passionate about this answer too because it kind of goes down to the theme of you got to know what you're signing up for. Some people are more inclined to pick things up like this. They have a natural ability to build things.

I would not say that Naomi or I are either one of those things. We did as much as we could. We YouTubed but there's some things that we're like, you know what? We just don't have the tools for that. We don't have this, we don't have that.

And so, it was having a very logical mindset about what can we accomplish and what can we not? And so, we did as much as we could, but if you'll notice in the documentary that when we got the bus, it already had a roof raise done to it.

And so being six five, I was like I love tiny, but I also have to live in here comfortably. And so, the Yates family out of Vicksburg, Mississippi had a bus that had a 25-inch roof raise.

Less House More Moola with Laura Lynch

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

And they're very, very ... I believe he is an (it's been a while now) either an architect ... I think he's an engineer or maybe an architectural engineer, I don't know. But you could tell that they were very good at what they did, and it was very well done.

And I messaged them, and I actually got that bus with the roof raise under \$5,000 at the time. I couldn't believe when they accepted it. It was almost one of those things where it was like, "Alright, I'm going to drive down there. Is there anything actually wrong with the bus because you just said that you would ..."

I almost was low balling, but at the time, it was all I could afford. And truthfully, we took out a \$5,000 loan just to get the bus. We had a lot of money in the house but we didn't have a lot of money in the savings. We had a lot going on at that time in our life.

So, that was also like a financial kind of risk. But what we did was over the course of two years was pay as we went. So, we couldn't do the roof raise because we didn't have the skillset, but we found one like that. And so, that was a huge blessing from the get go.

Then we did subfloors, we did a lot of the plumbing insulation, a lot of cosmetic work, but then it got to a point where we were going to spend more time learning or saving up for tools or things that we needed to where it's like, we can do that or we can find somebody.

And so, there's a guy named Carl, I don't know if he does this anymore. We probably drove him out of business because we were always pestering him over stuff. But it was PMK West Conversions, and so it was down in Columbus, Indiana. And so, we would drive down there.

Less House More Moola with Laura Lynch
<https://thetinyhouseadviser.com>

Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

And so, I tell people that if you don't feel like you can do something in regards to the build, and we did a lot of it, but there were so many things towards the end, the middle and the end that he helped us with because he just had more time.

He could do this full time, we were paying him. But I am also a filmmaker, that's pretty obvious. But I do camera work and stuff, and I do a lot of wedding videography.

And so, I was like if I spent my energy getting wedding videos and wedding gigs and then I make let's say eight grand doing a few weddings, and then I take that money and then I pay Carl to help me do the stuff that I know technically it would take me six months to a year to like figure out how to do, and I know he'll do it right ...

I was like, how do you channel your energy? How do you channel what you're going to do? And so, I utilized and outsourced quite a few things because I knew I was good at turning around video work and I could do that more effectively for my time.

And so, I think there's a lot of pride in doing it yourself, but I think that's a great thing if you're able to, and if you have the time and the resources and the land and the tools to do it.

But it's no reason to give up if you feel like you're overwhelmed. You can always find a new way to do it. And there's no shame in saying you didn't do the whole thing yourself.

Some people are very prideful in that, and I respect why they are, but just because you can't fix a bus and have to do a roof raise doesn't mean that you shouldn't try and live in a bus

Less House More Moola with Laura Lynch
<https://thetinyhouseadviser.com>

Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

because you can. You just got to be smart about how you allocate your time and your money.

Laura Lynch: Yeah, that's so good. There are certainly things that are easier to learn and certain tools that are easier to come by, and other things that maybe it's better to bring in a specialist, someone that has that capability and that skillset to your point.

It's kind of basics of economics — to focus on making money where you can do it the most efficiently and then hopefully pay somebody who can be very efficient with their time too. So, tell us what you learned about yourself through that process.

Kyle Thacker: I learned a lot of patience and forgiveness for myself. I'm a pretty intense person when it's something that I'm passionate about. And so, having the humility to realize that you can't do everything was something that I definitely learned through the build process.

Patience was a big one between ... we get asked all the time when living in the bus, "Did you guys want to kill each other?" And I was like, "No." I was like, "Living on the bus from a mental health area or a relationship health standpoint was pretty easy."

I mean, we have a great foundation, and we have a great marriage. And also, if you get in an argument, you can't go off to the bar with your buddies. You can't go in the basement and get away from them or go out to the yard.

You live in a small house together. And so, I was like, actually for a relationship standpoint, it was perfect because if you're in an argument, you're like, "Well, we got to figure this out because it's going to be a miserable time for both of us if we don't."

Less House More Moola with Laura Lynch
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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

But we learned throughout the build process to get back to your question, was that was tough because there are things that we both didn't know. And it's frustrating when you don't understand everything and you're trying to both figure it out.

And so, she makes a suggestion, and I was like, "I don't think that's it." And she's like, "Well, do you have a better idea?" And I'm like, "No, I don't. I just don't think that's right."

So, when we survived the two-year build process together, I was like, our marriage can last through anything. That's probably the biggest takeaway that I got from building a bus is patience.

Laura Lynch: Yeah. Awesome. Yeah, I think as I mentioned before that, my biggest takeaway was just like anything can be accomplished if you just-

Kyle Thacker: Yeah.

Laura Lynch: Keep at it. You just keep at it a little bit at a time.

Kyle Thacker: That was the thing, was like we got into really rough spots where we didn't know how to get through it, but it was just like not giving up. That was the big thing. It's like just figuring out another way to do things and get it done.

And so, yeah, I'm super proud of people that build it all themselves. I'm proud of people that acknowledge if they can't or they don't have the resources. And so, there's a lot of takeaways, but yeah, empowering and feeling empowered and just getting it done.

Whether you did every last thing yourself is something to ... I agree with you; after we got that done, I'm like, "Man, if we can

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

build a bus, then we can also travel the country and we can do whatever.” And that's what we did.

Laura Lynch: Yeah, so good. So, there's this beautiful scene in your documentary where you all close on the house and you put the trash out and you drive away. And I just wonder, like what was the feeling like that you had on that day?

Kyle Thacker: Oh man, it was nerve-wracking, but it was also, we intentionally did it this way where we talked up what we were going to do to everybody and anybody. So, when we got to like the moment where you had to go or not, it's like you had to, because you already spoke it into existence.

And so, I kind of have like the epic mentality. It's like just screw it, we're already in, let's go. Like some would call that reckless. I think it's calculated recklessness. I also just think it's not living an ordinary, boring life.

And so, it was kind of like where I knew that ... I was like I have no idea what's going to happen. The second we drove away from the house, it was like, we have an idea of what's going to happen, but we have no idea if this heater's going to work tonight, we're going to be freezing. We have no idea.

But it was kind of like just screw it, eff it. Let's just go for it and we'll figure it out along the way. The connection between Naomi and I and just knowing that we'll figure this out together because I didn't mind failing.

What I didn't want to happen was fail Naomi and put her or my dog or just put us in a situation that's not happy or good. So, that was the fear of that, but also the screw it, let's do it. We got this, we're in it together, let's go.

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

Laura Lynch: Yeah, I think that's a great relationship lesson through the build and then going off on this path, like you really are interdependent and also have learned so much about each other and how to work together, and how much each other is capable.

I mean, I remember the scene where Naomi's prying the heavy rubber stairs out of the bus. And I'm like, well there's a crowbar capability which will take you really far in life with the crowbar. So, yeah, you learn like the strength and resilience of each other and then you have a lot of trust in each other.

Kyle Thacker: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

Laura Lynch: So, now, I'm so curious, why is it that as you got ... and certainly, you had been filming as a profession, but when kind of did the idea occur to you, "Hey, I should turn this into a documentary," and why did you feel so compelled to document this journey?

Kyle Thacker: That's a good question. So, I didn't know that it was going to be a documentary until we had the bus. And at that time, I was also just like I was flirting with the idea of it. I know I wanted to do it, but I also didn't know ... I made a promise to myself that we're going to finish this bus no matter what.

And I 90% believe in myself that I would do that. But actually, committing to like a full-on documentary was about at 90% too. But in the beginning of the film where it's me at work and then you see the North Carolina trip, those parts, I had no idea the documentary is happening.

The work stuff was done for internal things, and it was just about promoting that we support real estate companies or real

Less House More Moola with Laura Lynch
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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

estate agencies in the markets that we serve. And we wanted to show that sort of thing. And so, that was just footage that we had and that was taken.

And then the trip to North Carolina right after that in the documentary was, I had heard a song by JR JR which is in there, which nowadays you can't even do because it's copyrighted. But I think I got grandfathered in.

So, like that video probably of JR JR listen to this podcast would like, "Hey, we should take that down." But I made that short little vacation clip just because I heard that song, and then there's a part where that goes, "I can't see you, boom, boom, boom, boom."

And like the beat, I'm like, what if that was a clip every half second? And so, just the way my mind works, I was like, man, if we go on this trip and we do all these hikes and stuff, I just want to make it cool. I want to make it fun. And we could just have this as a memory. So, that was when we found the school bus and all that, I had no idea we were making a documentary.

And then the coming weeks after that, when I went into crazy mode and started researching and doing everything I could to figure out more about the lifestyle, that's when we actually got the loan for the bus and drove down there and picked it up. That was the moment where I was like, this is either going to be a YouTube channel or it's going to be a documentary or maybe both.

And so, that's kind of how I figured once we took off on the trip, I knew a documentary was happening, but it was also like the YouTube subscriber stuff wasn't necessarily for me because there's a million darn bus like people that do that.

Less House More Moola with Laura Lynch
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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

And I wanted to make a piece of art. I wanted to make a story of inspiration, the whole look at me subscriber model, although there's nothing wrong with that, a ton of people make a living off of it — I just couldn't do it because I wasn't enjoying what I was doing.

It's like I want to film but not think about like three days from now, I got to turn it around for people. It's like I want to do that after the trip is over because I want to enjoy what I'm doing now.

Still want to film, just don't want to produce stuff every week. That sounded exhausting and kind of not what we wanted out of the trip.

Laura Lynch: And so, when you decided that you were making this art project for after the fact, what was the message that you think that was kind of calling to you? What did you think a larger audience needed to know?

Kyle Thacker: I wanted people to see what was capable. If you really put your head down and do something and live for yourself as opposed to others, that was kind of the main message.

And it was really about educating people on bus life because we fell in love with bus life and we wanted people to understand that, tried to make the documentary as realistic as possible to show the steps on how we got there and the struggles that we had to show that, hey, you don't have to be this master craftsman. That was the main goal with the documentary.

But as most documentaries do when you film them, they change over time and the stories change. And so, it really ended up about halfway through with kind of like the revelation

Less House More Moola with Laura Lynch
<https://thetinyhouseadviser.com>

Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

of not anchoring your emotions to the summit and showing the Grand Canyon Yosemite and we wanted to go to Banff, Canada.

We didn't quite make it there, but it's like we wanted to do all these things, but it ended up being a story about Naomi and I. Although, it's called Skoolie and it's about tiny house living and what you can do with it and the kind of the adventures you can have that no matter what stage of life you're in, it ended up being a story about my wife and I.

And so, I didn't know it was going to be that way, but it just turned out to be. And I'm happy it did.

Laura Lynch: Yeah, it's amazing the way that that creative product that you're creating can sort of take its own life and-

Kyle Thacker: Yeah.

Laura Lynch: And teach you about something about your story, what a beautiful process. So, you and I already kind of touched on this, but you were very authentic and telling your story and what you went through on an emotional journey on that documentary.

And as you've clearly pointed out, we're very much in an image focused culture and everybody's focused on only showing the best version of themselves.

As an example, I have chickens and the chicken photos that I see on Instagram are not representative of reality. So, share with us kind of a little bit more about what your intent is there about being so authentic on screen.

Less House More Moola with Laura Lynch
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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road with Kyle Thacker

Kyle Thacker: A lot of it has to do with me and my own mental health. I put on an image for my entire adult life up until, gosh, I don't know, four years ago, five years ago.

Again, being brought up in the social structure of MySpace and the beginnings of Facebook and Twitter and all that stuff, is that social validation when at an early age is everything.

And that's the case for everybody at all stages. Not just my generation, but acceptance at that age, sitting at the cool table at lunch and all that stuff that's what you care about.

And so, I think for me, I led a life of trying to project an image that wasn't me because of the expectations of society around me. And then I was going further and further down into a deep depression because I wasn't living my own truth.

And so, when I finally (and this helped a lot) — when I met Naomi, it was like she was the first person that I had dated where I gave her a real honest version of me from the get-go, which I myself wasn't proud of. And I expected her to walk away from me because I had just had a lot of issues.

I was drinking too much, I was just not leading the life that was desirable probably for somebody to be around. And so, I wasn't even happy about what I was doing, I was just kind of floating through life and I was like, I had to dissect what all that meant and why I felt so poorly. And I used to just think that it was my situation, or I wanted to be here, go to that summit and then I'm going to feel differently.

But really it was just the day-to-day processes of who I am. And so, what I realized was that if I wasn't blatantly honest with myself, and that also meant my projection of the messages that

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I put out there of movies that I make ... if I'm not exactly who I am, then I'm not going to be happy with myself.

And so, I used to be ashamed of that stuff and now, showing real raw emotion and vulnerabilities, that's because I do feel that way and I do get emotional a lot and maybe I'm more emotional than most men.

But I do feel I've had a lot of friends of mine come up to me and talk to me about this stuff and I have a lot more friends that open up to me more than they probably opened up to others because they know that they can trust me. And I think that's a beautiful thing.

And so, with the film, it was really about me having a distaste for what that style of representation online causes. If anybody's like me, I would imagine they'd feel that way because they know it's a lie, they know it's not exactly.

And so, you're not getting true, honest validation from people, or you're not getting true honest feedback or criticism from people. You're getting fake everything. And so, for me, it was really about wanting to not be a hypocrite and follow the same path.

Because you want to look as cool as possible and show your amazing trip, but also, it's like you're further perpetuating a system that you disagree with. And so, I personally have a better mental health.

I just have better mental health now because if somebody doesn't like me for who I am – if I'm too emotional, if I'm too this, I'm too that, then I'm actually excited about it because I'm

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

like then I'm not going to put any energy into to having a relationship with you.

And so, the people that I used to think were like the cool people, I've actually ... you look at the executives of companies and they're great people, but are they the people that I should be around or something like that?

And I've had some people, society would judge somebody that lives on a bus. I'm like those people are awesome. They're the nicest, kindest people and those are the people I want to surround myself with. And those people are more raw and real and emotional and vulnerable, and all that stuff.

So, I just wanted to show that you don't have to be perfect to do things. If you're not going to show rawness, then people who ... everybody's raw watching, so why would you not be the raw one presenting? It just doesn't make sense not to do that.

Laura Lynch: Yeah, I think that's so good. And it just takes life beating you up enough to realize that you're acting out inauthentically and that you're living inauthentically and you're not being your true self.

And yet always we're expected to hide our own voice and to conform to whatever situation you're in or company that you're in, or family relationships that you're in. And so, people generally speaking stay on the surface, and they don't allow themselves to really explore what's going on deep inside them.

And then they end up feeling isolated. We have a sort of chronic problem in our country around people feeling isolated and disconnected even though we're all more connected than ever before.

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

Because we don't have those authentic connections that we are yearning for because we don't have authentic conversations, which is for listeners why this podcast is never about composting toilets. It's always about personal growth topics because these authentic connections are so valuable and so important for our mental wellbeing.

Kyle Thacker: Agreed.

Laura Lynch: So, share with me what do you think is — and I'm going to change it up here a little bit and ask, what was the biggest mental health benefit for you of going tiny?

Kyle Thacker: Oh, definitely the less is more philosophy. It took us two or three rounds of purging stuff that we had, and we didn't have a ton of stuff. So, I'm thinking of friends and people I know that have just a boatload of things.

And it took three rounds of purging because there's things where I'm like, "Oh, I might want to hold onto that." And then the second round, you get a little further down, you're like, "I don't need that. I don't need that. I haven't used that thing in five years, why do I need it? Is there an emotional value to it?" You just kind of go through these like reasonings. And then the second one, I mean, it got done.

I think I had two pairs of shorts, six T-shirts or something, a pair of shoes, hiking shoes and my poles and then my camera gear and my laptop and that was it. That's all I owned.

And life is so much more beautiful when you don't have all those things because that doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what brand of shirt you have, it doesn't matter if you have the newest iPhone. Can you make phone calls? Can you do this stuff?

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

I mean, there's certain things that you want to have the nicest things in because it's like your hobby or something, and that's totally fine. But the minimalism lifestyle was such a transformative thing for me. And just you don't have to one, worry about money as much.

You don't have to worry about where you're putting stuff. How are you getting everything home? It's just life's so much better when you have less. And I see people with just a bajillion things and they're usually the most unhappy because they have more stuff to think about. Simplicity is a beautiful thing.

Laura Lynch: Yeah, I love that. So, have you identified kind of what is a biggest challenge that you see for people that are kind of ... I'm sure you've talked to a lot of people that are curious about what you've done in your documentary. What's the biggest challenge about making that change in your life and going tiny in whatever format?

Kyle Thacker: Outside of just like a challenge from the like inner self of like thinking about what's going tiny, I would say that it's really about you have to want to do it first and foremost from like a very practical standpoint.

I feel like you want to do it because of it's got to be a very clear reason of why you want to do it. If you just think it's fun, then yeah, doing it in an Airbnb and trying it out for a bit for a few days to see if it works.

But I think that the transition is not having a strong grasp on more. I think we're raised to like the bigger the house, the better, the faster the car, the newer the car, all that stuff. I don't know, if you just get to a mindset where it's not that important to you and you realize ... or you get there, there's a lot of things

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

that I got there with, and you realize it doesn't bring you happiness, well then you start to reduce things. You just start to find owning a bigger home doesn't make me happy.

What if I went smaller because that would allow more time for me to do this and that. So, I just think I'm in that mindset of like less is more, and it doesn't mean that you're just getting everything less in life. And you're like, "I'm not going to eat as much pizza and I love pizza, or I'm not going to have as much house. I can't play movies like I want to in my house because I don't have a movie theater room."

It's like, if you realize that that stuff's not that important to you, it's very easy to transition to a tiny life. And you can use all your additional resources and capital for other stuff that you enjoy. I just think it's having a healthy mindset about exactly what you want and how you want to do it.

Because as you, I would imagine know, there's 500 different routes you can take going tiny. You can do it for a week, you can do it for a year, you can do it full-time, you can travel lots of stuff.

Laura Lynch: Yeah. And so, you only did it for a season. So, how have the lessons that you learned, and the lifestyle change and the mental health change and all of that, how do they impact your world today?

Kyle Thacker: It's definitely like the philosophy and the lifestyle that we had has not changed. We're definitely more removed from all the noise. When you spend a month in the woods with each other and nothing else, it's a beautiful thing.

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

And you realize how amazing simplicity is and just having a fire and not having to spend money to ... like why would you ever go to a bar and spend \$100 again, Kyle? Why would you ever do that?

And so, I think like just the lifestyle that all this season really helped us going forward is where we are in a house again, but we didn't buy into a house that we couldn't afford. It's the same size if not a little smaller than our last house.

And it's just I think the minimalism and the simplicity and so like we're scheming all these ways to travel now about how we can do more things. I mentioned the idea of getting a van and doing the East Coast here soon. We'll see if that happens.

But yeah, it's just kind of made like all the big problems go away and just, yeah, we think very simplistically and that's been a huge mental health boost for us because you don't have all that clutter in your head.

Laura Lynch: And how has this experience informed your perception of financial security, financial independence? We talked about risk a little bit earlier. How did your sort of financial framework change based on that experience?

Kyle Thacker: Yeah, it hasn't changed too much. Because I've always been very diligent with money. Every morning the first thing I do is check my Chase app, which is probably unhealthy, but I do that just to see where I'm at because I always want to know.

But it's definitely what do you spend your money on. I think it's important to save. You don't want to just live you recklessly because if you don't have insurance and you break your arm, you're screwed.

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

You want to be smart about how you do things, but I do think that always making sure that you're having money to treat yourself to do adventures because you have no idea whether you'll live another day or two, it just happens all the time, especially as you get older.

You have friends that pass away, you have parents and things like that. So, understanding that you only get one shot at it. So, be smart with your money, save. And the best way to do that is to not spend your money on stuff that doesn't matter. And then so you're able to save up more.

And if you want to go to Alaska and explore things and do ... let's say you love taking pictures of birds, then go to Alaska and take pictures of bald eagles. Financially, having the mindset of like fun is definitely a big priority, but also being smart about it, not just spending everything you got, that's never a good idea. You probably have fun doing it, but it's probably not the smartest.

Laura Lynch: Sure. Yeah. Good, I think that there's just so many different threads that we can pull on the benefits of taking a time out from sort of the prescribed path that we all got set on.

And taking the time out and spending some time in nature and in a skoolie and spending some time with someone that you really want to get to know really well, and checking out from social media and understanding what you actually need to have on a daily basis to survive.

I think that really helps frame a reset. And you've described all of that really beautifully for us and helped us see that through the documentary as well. So, thanks for sharing that with the world.

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

I think that everyone will appreciate so much seeing your perspective on that. And also, your sense of what's capable what you can do if you put your mind to something that's may be completely new for you, what can be done.

Hopefully people will feel really encouraged by your story. So, Kyle, thank you so much for joining me and of course, make sure that you take a moment and share with the audience. I know you don't want to be found in too many places, but where might they find your film?

Kyle Thacker: Yeah, it's on YouTube for now. We're in a bunch of film festivals and there's maybe a point where it goes on a streaming service. We don't know, but I wanted to make sure that everybody could watch it for free for now at least.

And so, that's on Shutter Speed. Just a camera shutter speed, go figure. The Skoolie S-K-O-O-L-I-E. So, if you look on YouTube, Shutter Speed, the Skoolie. And then the documentary is just called SKOOLIE official documentary.

So, you'll see a thumbnail picture of my wife and I on top of our bus at Crater Lake. It's an hour and 43 minutes. It shows the full process from idea, inception, building and the trip.

And so, if you're interested in the lifestyle, there's a lot of ways to do it, but you could watch the way we did it and I encourage everybody to watch and do it because it's a lot of fun and we don't regret anything for sure.

Laura Lynch: Awesome. Well, Kyle, thank you so much for sharing it with us and thanks for being on the podcast today.

Kyle Thacker: Yes, thank you so much. I really had a good time.

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Redefining Happiness: Life on the Road **with Kyle Thacker**

Well, that's it for today's episode of Less House More Moola. To access valuable financial tips and resources tailored to your tiny living journey, join our exclusive community at thetinyhouseadviser.com.

Here, you'll find a supportive network of like-minded individuals committed to helping each other navigate the challenges and celebrate the victories of embracing a minimalist lifestyle.

So, don't miss out on the opportunity to be part of this empowering tribe. Be sure to tune in next Thursday for another insightful episode of Less House More Moola, where we'll continue to explore practical solutions and inspiring stories to help you create the life you've always dreamed of.

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