The subtle art of not giving a f\*ck. a counterintuitive approach to living a good life. by Mark Manson. Summary by Herbygee Guerrier



**The FOUR LEAP NOTIONS:**

* The key to a good life is not giving a fuck about more; it’s giving a fuck about less, giving a fuck about only what is true and immediate and important.
* Seeking out something important and meaningful in your life is the best productive use of your time and energy.
* Accepting your experience of life as being great and wonderful is the single greatest thing you can do for your happiness.
* There is no value in suffering when it is done without purpose.

**The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck summary**

This is my notes and thoughts from the book. They are informal and often contain quotes and keynotes of important passages from the book. Enjoy!

Part 1: Don’t Try

The positive and the happy self-help stuff we hear all the time; is actually fixating on what we're lacking.  We stand in fronts of the mirror and repeat affirmation saying that we’re beautiful because we don’t feel beautiful already.

Ironically, this fixation on the positive, on what’s best, what’s better, or superior; only serve to remind us over and over again of what we are not, of what we lacked, or what we should have been but failed to be. After all, no truly happy person feel the need to stand in front of a mirror and recite that she’s happy*.* She just is.

If you are dreaming of something all the time, then you are reinforcing the same unconscious reality over and over that you are not that.

“The key to a good life is not giving a fuck about more; it’s giving a fuck about less, giving a fuck about only what is true and immediate and important.”

*You will never be happy if you continued to search for what happiness consists of. Or put more simply* DON’T TRY.

THE FEEDBACK LOOP FROM HELL

Everyone wants you to believe that the secret to a good life is to have a nicer job or a better car or a prettier girlfriend, through the lens of “hey my life is cooler than yours.” social media type, can really have a toll on us.

I mean, if you look at your Facebook feed, everybody there is having a fucking grand old time. And you can’t help but think your life sucks even more than you thought.

We feel sad for the fact that we feel sad, or we feel guilty for feeling guilty, or we get anxious for being anxious. Thus we can’t help but ask ourselves: What is WRONG with me?

The feedback loop is when we get caught up in the state of judging our emotions. And it’s not necessarily these emotions that are good or bad, it’s what you do about it, and how you react to it. The more you judge or trying to shut those emotions out, the worse they seem to become.

The crisis that we're facing is no longer material; it’s existential, it’s spiritual. We have plenty of resources that we can live without. We have so much stuff and so many opportunities that we don’t even know what to give a fuck about anymore.

By not giving a fuck that you feel bad, you short circuit the feedback loop from hell. You say to yourself ” I feel like shit, but you give a fuck.” then you stop hating yourself for feeling bad.

The subtle art of not giving a fuck

* Subtlety #1: Not giving a fuck is not about being indifferent. It just means you’re comfortable with being different. Don’t say fuck it to everything in life, just to the unimportant things.
* Subtlety #2: To not give a fuck about adversity, you must first care about something more important than adversity.
* Subtlety #3: Whether you realize it or not, you are always choosing what to give a fuck about. The question to ask is " how is this is serving me right now"

*The moments we stop giving a fuck and take action are often the moments that most define the path of our lives.*

HAPPINESS IS A PROBLEM

We have this thesis in our mind that governs our assumptions and beliefs about happiness, it what we called the algorithmic of happiness. We said to ourselves; if I achieve X, then I can be happy. If I look like Y, then I can be happy.

This hypothesis however often fails. Happiness is not a solvable equation; you can’t be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of. If you look to people, places, things, or circumstances for fulfillment or happiness, you will be disappointed again and again. Instead, you can allow the world to make you conscious.

*As Albert Camus once puts it – “You will never live if you are looking for the meaning of life*

Discontentment and turmoil are deep-rooted parts of the human nature and, as we’ll see, are also fundamental for creating consistent happiness.

*“The desire for more positive experience is itself a negative experience. And, paradoxically, the acceptance of one’s negative experience is itself a positive experience.”*

In other words…” wanting positive experience is a negative experience. Accepting negative experience is a positive experience.

*It’s what the philosopher Alan Watts used to refer to as the “law of reversed effort” also known as the “The backward law.” meaning; the more you pursuit feeling better all the time, the less satisfied you’ll become. As pursuing something only referred to your lack of it in the first place. – The more desperately you want to be rich, the poorer or unworthy you feel. Regardless of the amount of money you make. The more desperately you want to be happy and loved, the lonelier and more afraid you become regardless of those you surround you.*

*“When you try to stay on the surface of the water, you sink; but when you try to sink, you float’ and that ‘insecurity is the result of trying to be secure.” – Alan Watts.*

SUFFERING

Suffering from your fears and anxiety is what allow you to build courage and perseverance. Practical enlightenment is the act of becoming comfortable with the idea that some suffering is inevitable.

* The avoidance of suffering is a form of suffering.
* The avoidance of struggles is the struggle.
* The denying of failure is a failure.
* Hiding what’s shameful, is itself a form of shame.

There’s an internal challenge that we face as human beings, that no matter how successful we become; we still have this internal battles, stress, and challenges that will occur regardless of the amount of money we have or friends we have. And if we don’t know how to deal with our inner battles, then we are going to get overwhelmed and suffer. So it is a constant awareness of letting go; working on ourselves, and enjoy the process of where we are no matter what’s happening in our lives. There is no value in suffering when it is done without purpose.

Happiness comes from solving problems

Manson talks about hoping for a life “full of good problems” instead of hoping for one without any problems. The solution is in the “solving” of the problems, not by wishing it to disappear.

No one is ever going to have a life free from problems. Even if you solve all of your immediate problems, any leftover worries will seem bigger by comparison.

The process of solving our problems or overcoming our problems is like an engine that generates happiness. When avoiding crucial problems in the now, eventually it will make you feel miserable.

We get to control what our problems mean to us based on how we choose to think about them and how we choose to measure them. The way we measure success influences how we view the problems we face.

Don't hope for a life without problems. There’s no such thing. Instead, hope for a life with good problems.

Happiness is a constant work in progress because solving problems is a constant work in progress—the solutions to today’s problems will generate a relation for tomorrow’s problems, and so on. True happiness occurs only when you find the problems you enjoy having and enjoy solving.

Set Apart Your Emotions

Don’t ask yourself what you want out of life. It’s easy to have a desire for success, fame, optimal health, and great sex. I mean, who wouldn’t want any of those, right? There’s nothing wrong with that. But a much more interesting question to ask yourself is, “*What kind of pain do you want?*” If you are passionate about something, you will continue to pursue it even if it’s difficult. By not giving a fuck about the pain your goals depend upon, you can then become unstoppable.

What we are willing to struggle for is a greater determinant of how our lives turn out.

Look, we all love to fantasize about dreams and desires; but the problem is, we can’t just be in love with daydreaming about the result; we have to *love the process as well because the joy is in the climb itself.*

You Are Not Special

Entitled people feel as though their problems deserve to be treated differently. They begin to see all adversity as injustice, all challenges as automatic failures, etc. It puts them in a state of constant feedback that can only drive you insane and keep you from growing personally.

Manson says that the way to combat this is to not choose to be special or unique, But rather to see ourselves in an ordinary way like a normal person with normal problems. This makes it feel less like the universe is out to get you. It’s important to focus on the things that are immediately in front of you and the things that will have a lasting impact in your life.

People who base their self-worth on being right about everything to prevent themselves from learning from their mistakes. There’s a saying that goes something like this, “*the man who believes he knows everything learns nothing.”*

A person who actually has a high self-worth is able to look at the negative parts of his character frankly—“Yes, sometimes I’m irresponsible with money,” “Yes, sometimes I exaggerate my own successes,” “Yes, I rely too much on others to support me and should be more self-reliant”—and then acts to improve upon them.

The true measurement of self-worth is not how a person feels about her positive experiences, but rather how she feels about her negative experiences.

The truth is, there’s no such thing as a personal problem. If you’ve got a problem, chances are millions of other people have had it in the past, have it now, and are going to have it in the future. Likely people you know too. That doesn’t minimize the problem or mean that it shouldn’t hurt. It doesn’t mean you aren’t legally a victim in some circumstances. It just means that you’re not special.

The tyranny of Exceptionalism

Most of us are pretty average at most things we do. Even if you’re exceptional at one thing, chances are you’re average or below average at most other things. Few of us have ever become exceptional at more than one if anything at all. C’mon Let’s face it, there’s not many Leonardo Da-Vinci left in this world, and that’s totally fine. were not all destined to do something truly extraordinary with our lives, it something we have to embrace.

Nowadays, it’s very difficult to be extraordinary at the extreme. The commonness of technology and mass marketing is screwing up a lot of people’s expectations for themselves. This flood of extreme information has conditioned us to believe that exceptionalism is the new normal. And because we’re all quite average most of the time, we feel pretty damn insecure and desperate. Because clearly, we are somehow “not good enough.”

*Technology has solved old economic problems by giving us new psychological problems. The Internet has not just open-sourced information; it has also open-sourced for greater insecurity, self-doubt, and shame*

If everyone were extraordinary, then by definition no one would be extraordinary. To be truly great at something requires a dedication to a shit ton of time and energy to do it.

The secret to your emotional healing is to accept the mundane truths of life: truth, such as “Your actions actually don’t matter that much in the grand scheme of things” and “The vast majority of your life will be boring and not noteworthy, and that’s okay.”

The pleasure of simple friendships, creating something, helping a person in need, reading a good book, laughing with someone you care about, Sounds boring, doesn’t it? That’s because these things are ordinary. And what actually matters.

The value of suffering

If suffering is inevitable, then the question we should be asking is not “ how do I stop suffering? But “why am I suffering? For what purpose?

People who have faces adversity tend to express more compassion toward others who are suffering. Our Problems may be inevitable, but the meaning of each problem is not.

Even though all life involves suffering, life also includes some joyful moments.

We get to control what our problems mean based on how we choose to think about them, and the standard by which we choose to measure them. When a suffering meant something, we are able to endure it or even enjoy it. When we can accept this noble truth, it actually lessens our pain.

Values and Metrics

Some values and metrics are better than others, some lead to good problems that can be easily solved. Others may lead to the bad problems that are not easily and regularly solved. If your values and metrics are based upon an evaluation of others in the vibe for status, chances are you will distress and constantly worried about the Joneses. So the question is not *why* we evaluate ourselves against others, rather the question should be, *by what standard do we measure ourselves?*

If you want to change how you see your problems, you have to change what you value and/or how you measure failure/success.

Shitty values

1. Pleasure. *pleasure is great, but it’s a horrible value to prioritize your life around. Ask any drug addict. It is the easiest to obtain and the easiest to lose.*
2. Material success. *People that measure their self-worth base on a number of status symbols they’re able to collect are quite often shallow, and probably assholes as well.*
3. Always being right. *People who base their self-worth on being right about everything to prevent themselves from learning from their mistake. They close themselves off to new and important information and are not often corporate with others. As a human, we’re wrong all the time, making poor assumptions, and misjudge others is part of our nature. So if your metric for life success is to always be right, then you’ll have a hard time rationalizing a decent conclusion.*
4. Staying positive *while it’s always good to stay on “the sunny side of life,” the truth is, sometimes life sucks. And the healthiest thing we can do is admitting it. (Constant positivity is a form of avoidance, not a solution to all life’s problems.)*

This is why these values—pleasure, material success, always being right, staying positive—are poor standards for a person’s life. Some of the greatest moments of one’s life are often not pleasant.

Defining Good Values and Bad Values

Good values are reality-based values that focus on the present moment. They are socially constructive and immediate and controllable.

*For instance: honesty, innovation, vulnerability, standing up for oneself, standing up for others, self-respect, curiosity, charity, humility, and creativity.*

Honesty is a good value. It’s something you have complete control over. It reflects reality, and it benefits others.

Bad values are... you’ve guessed it, are the complete opposite. They are not immediate or controllable; they are the superstitions and the things that are socially destructive. Here’s a few example.

* Dominance through manipulation or violence
* Indiscriminate fucking
* Feeling good all the time
* Always being the center of attention
* Not being alone
* Being liked by everybody
* Being rich for the sake of being rich
* Sacrificing small animal to the pagan gods.

Values are about prioritization. The values that you prioritize above everything else, are therefore influences your decision-making more than anything else.

YOU ARE ALWAYS CHOOSING

Often the only difference between a problem being painful or being powerful is a sense that we chose it, and that we are responsible for it. When we feel that we’re choosing our problems, we feel empowered and responsible for the outcome. And when we feel that they are being forced upon us, against our will, we feel victimized and miserable.

We don’t always have control to what happens to us, but most of the time, we have control of how we can respond to a situation.

The point is, we are always choosing, whether we recognize it or not. Always. To not give a fuck about anything is still to give a fuck about something.

*The real question is, what are we choosing to give a fuck about*

Responsibility/Fault Fallacy

A lot of people hesitate to take responsibility for their problems because they believe that to be responsible for your problems is also to be at fault for your problems. This is not true. There’s a difference between blaming someone else for your situation and someone that is actually responsible for your situation.

The more we choose to accept responsibility for our lives, the more power we will exercise over our lives. Accepting responsibility for our problems is thus the first step to solving them.

People will often fight over who gets to be responsible for their success and happiness but taking responsibility for our problems is far more important because that’s where real learning comes from.

The hands we’re dealt

We all get dealt cards, some of us get better cards than other...while we can sit there and complain about our cards, we can also choose to play our hands wisely by the choices we make of those cards.

The beauty of poker is that while luck is always involved, luck doesn’t dictate the long-term result of the game. a person can get dealt terrible cards and beat someone who gets dealt great cards. The winner gets determined by the choices each player makes.

There is no how

Do, or do not; There is no how, you are already choosing, in every moment of every day, what to give a fuck about, so change is as simple as choosing to give a fuck about something else regardless the circumstance.

YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT EVERYTHING

When we learn something new, we don’t go from “wrong” to “right.” Rather, we go from wrong to slightly less wrong. and when we learn something additional, we go from slightly less wrong, to slightly less wrong than that. We are always in the process of approaching truth and perfection without actually ever reaching truth or perfection.

We shouldn’t seek to find the ultimate “right” answer for ourselves, but rather, we should seek to chip away at the ways that we’re wrong today so that we can be a little less wrong tomorrow.

Certainty is the enemy of growth. Nothing is for certain until it has already happened. That’s why accepting the inevitable imperfections of our values is necessary for any growth to take place.

All we know for certain is what hurts in the moment and what doesn’t.

Instead of looking to be right all the time, we should be looking for how we’re wrong all the time. Because often we are.

 Be Careful What You Believe

Our brains are meaning machines. The associations our brain makes between two or more experiences generate what we understand as “meaning”.

Not only does our memory suck—suck to the point that eyewitness testimony isn’t necessarily taken seriously in court cases anymore. When we experience an events or situation, we then remember it slightly differently a few days later.

Our mind’s biggest priority when processing experiences are to interpret them in such a way that will match with all of our previous experiences, feelings, and beliefs.

Our brain is always trying to make sense of our current situation based on what we already believe and have already experienced. Every new piece of information is measured against the values and conclusions we already have. As a result, our brain is always biased toward what we feel to be true in that moment.

It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting It.” –Aristotle

All of our beliefs are wrong. Some are just less wrong than others.

The Danger of Pure Certainty

Certainty is not only unattainable, but the pursuit of certainty often breeds more (and worse) insecurity.

The more you try to be certain about something, the more uncertain and insecure you will feel. In contrary, the more you embrace being uncertain and not knowing, the more comfortable you will feel in knowing what you don’t know.

Uncertainty is the root of all progress and all growth. As the old saying goes, “the man who believes he knows everything learns nothing.” The more we admit we do not know, the more opportunities we gain to learn.

The only way to solve our problems is to first admit that our actions and beliefs up to this point have been wrong and are not working. This openness to being wrong must exist in other for any real change or growth to take place.

Manson’s Law of Avoidance

The more something threatens our identity, the more likely will avoid it. That means, the more something threatens to change how we view ourselves, how successful/unsuccessful we believe ourselves to be, how well we see ourselves living up to our values, the more we will avoid getting around to doing it.

There’s a certain comfort that comes with knowing how you fit in the world. Anything that shakes up that comfort—even if it could potentially make your life better—is fundamentally scary.

We all have values for ourselves. We protect these values. We try to live up to them and we justify them and maintain them. Even if we don’t mean to, that’s how our brain is wired. If I believe I’m a nice guy, I’ll avoid situations that could potentially contradict that belief. If I believe I’m an awesome cook, I’ll seek out opportunities to prove that to myself over and over again. The belief always takes preference.

Until we change how we view ourselves, what we believe we are and are not, we cannot overcome our avoidance and anxiety. We cannot change.

How to Be a Little Less Certain of Yourself

Knowing yourself or finding yourself can be dangerous. It’s best to never know who you are because that’s what keeps you striving and discovering. It forces you to remain humble in your judgments and accepting the differences in others.

Questioning ourselves and doubting our own thoughts and beliefs is one of the hardest skills to develop. But it can be done. Here are some questions that will help you breed a little more uncertainty in your life:

1. What if I'm wrong?
2. What would it mean if I were wrong?
3. Would being wrong create a better or a worse problem than my current problem, for both others and myself?

Failure Is the Way Forward

The magnitude of your success is tied to how many times you’ve failed at something. In his book “the outliers” Malcolm Gladwell, explained that it takes about 10,000 hours to be considered an expert at any skills set. Just imagine a young child learning to walk for the first time, that child will fall down over and over again and never give up until one day it succeeded. a child may not necessarily apply the 10,000 hours rule, but it a bit closer than you think.

It’s along those hours of practicing, failing, trying different tactics and methods that we eventually learn from our errors and make adjustments accordingly.

It’s quite similar to “*the law of averages.”* Which stated--the more failure or rejections you’ve acquired at a particular experiment, the more likely your next approach could turn into a success. Think of a door-to-door salesman for instance.

Pain is part of the process

It’s important to feel the pain when going after your dreams or whatever you’ve chosen to give a fuck about. It’s only when we feel intense pain that we’re willing to look at our values and question why they seem to be failing us. When you're just chasing after highs to cover up pain, then you’ll never generate the necessary motivation to actually change.

The “Do Something” Principle

We can be truly successful only at something we’re willing to fail at. If we’re unwilling to fail, then we’re unwilling to succeed. The thing about motivation is that it’s not only a three-part chain but an endless loop. It goes something like this:

Inspiration → Motivation → Action → Inspiration → Motivation → Action → Etc

The action isn’t just the effect of motivation; it’s also the cause of it. Do something and inspiration will follow.

Action → Inspiration → Motivation

* If you lack the motivation to make an important change in your life, do something—anything, really— even if it’s really small, and let good actions cascade as a result.
* How do you write a book? Write “200 crappy words per day” and you’ll find motivation often flows out of you.
* If there is no reason to do anything, if life is pointless, then there is also no reason to not do anything right? What do you have to lose? You’re going to die anyway, so your fears and embarrassments of failures don’t mean anything. You might as well try.

The Importance of Saying No

It’s crucial to express our true feelings and staying true to ourselves. Otherwise, we stand for nothing. If nothing is better or more desirable than anything else, then we are empty and our life is meaningless. We are without values and therefore live our life without any purpose.

The act of choosing a value for yourself requires rejecting alternative values. We all must give a fuck about something, in order to value something. And *to value something, we must reject what is not that something.* To value X, we must reject non-X.

Honesty is a natural human craving. But part of having honesty in our lives is becoming comfortable with saying and hearing the word “no.” In this way, rejection actually makes our relationships better and our emotional lives healthier.

Healthy & unhealthy relationship

The difference between a healthy and an unhealthy relationship comes down to two things:

*1)* How well each person in the relationship accepts responsibility.

2) The willingness of each person to both rejects and be rejected by their partner.

For a relationship to be healthy, both people must be willing and able to both say no and hear no. Without that, boundaries break down and one person’s problems and values come to dominate the other’s. A healthy relationship is not about controlling one another’s emotions, but rather about each partner supporting the other in their individual growth and in solving their own problems.

It’s not about giving a fuck about everything your partner gives a fuck about; it’s about giving a fuck about your partner regardless of the fucks he or she gives. That’s unconditional love, baby.

 Trust

Trust is the most important ingredient in any relationship, for the simple reason that without trust, the relationship doesn’t actually mean anything.

When our highest priority is to always to make ourselves feel good, or to always make our partner feel good, then nobody ends up feeling good. And the relationship falls apart without you even knowing it

This is what’s so destructive about cheating. It’s not about the sex. It’s about the trust that has been destroyed as a result of the sex. Without trust, the relationships can no longer function. So it’s either rebuild the trust or say your goodbyes.

Commitment

Commitment allows you to focus closely on a few highly important goals. and achieve a greater degree of success than you otherwise would. It’s about Investing deeply in one person, one place, one job, etc… although, one activity might deny us the freedom of experiences we’d like, pursuing a range of experience denies us the opportunity to enjoy the rewards of the depth of the experience.

In a weird way, committing to one thing offers more freedom than anything else because it relieves you of all the second-guessing about what else is out there. It makes decision-making easier and removes any fear of missing out; knowing that what you already have is good enough.

After all, you have to go out there and discover what seems worth investing yourself in. But depth is where the gold is buried. And you have to stay committed to something and go deep to dig it up. That’s true in relationships, in a career, in building a great lifestyle—in everything.

And…Then You Die

We’re all driven by fear to give way too many fucks about something because giving a fuck about something is the only thing that distracts us from the reality and inevitability of our own death. And to truly not give a single fuck is to achieve a quasi-spiritual state of embracing the impermanence of one’s own existence. In that state, one is far less likely to get caught up in various forms of entitlement.

Without acknowledging the ever-present gaze of death, the superficial will appear important, and the important will appear superficial. Death is the only thing we can know with any certainty. And yet, Death scares us. And because it scares us, we avoid thinking about it, talking about it, sometimes even acknowledging it, even when it’s happening to someone close to us. You too are going to die, and that’s because you too were fortunate enough to have lived.

All of the meaning in our life is shaped by our innate desire to never truly die. Our physical bodies will die, but we cling to the idea that we can live on through religion, politics, sports, art, and technological innovation.

SOMETHING BIGGER THAN YOURSELF

The only way to be comfortable with death is to understand and see yourself as something bigger than yourself; to choose values that stretch beyond serving yourself, that are simple and immediate and controllable and tolerant of the chaotic world around you.

You are already great because, in the face of endless confusion and certain death, you continue to choose what to give a fuck about and what not to. This mere fact, this simple optioning for your own values in life, already makes you beautiful, already makes you successful, and already makes you loved. Even if you don’t realize it, or even if you’re someone sleeping in a gutter and starving.

*This summary is not intended as a replacement for the original book and all quotes are credited to the above-mentioned author and publisher. As always, thank you for reading. :)*