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Book Title: The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life

Amazon Link:

<https://www.amazon.com/Subtle-Art-Not-Giving-Counterintuitive/dp/0062457713>

Summary:

This book is hilariously written and quite entertaining, at least for the first half of the book. It basically teaches you that it's not worth giving a fuck about things that aren't important or meaningful in life. Life is so short that we shouldn't waste it by spending time on things, or giving fucks about things that are petty. We should live life to the fullest as if we had 1 day left to live.

Table of Contents:

Stop Giving A Fuck	2
Finding Something Important and Meaningful	2
The Backwards Law	2
The Premise is the Problem	3
Suffering = Change	3
Happiness comes from solving problems	3
Material Success	4
Staying Positive	4
Good Healthy Values	5
Five counterintuitive values	5
Blame	6
Luck	6
How to Be a Little Less Certain of Yourself	6
Don't just sit there. Do something. The answers will follow.	7
Don't be friends with people you don't really like	7
More is not always better	8

Stop Giving A Fuck

1. Most of us struggle throughout our lives by giving too many fucks in situations where fucks do not deserve to be given. We give too many fucks about the rude gas station attendant who gave us our change in nickels. We give too many fucks when a show we liked was canceled on TV. We give too many fucks when our coworkers don't bother asking us about our awesome weekend.
2. You're going to die one day. I know that's kind of obvious, but I just wanted to remind you in case you'd forgotten. You and everyone you know are going to be dead soon. And in the short amount of time between here and there, you have a limited amount of fucks to give. Very few, in fact. And if you go around giving fuck about everything and everyone without conscious thought or choice—well, then you're going to get fucked.
3. If you find yourself consistently giving too many fucks about trivial shit that bothers you—your ex-boyfriend's new Facebook picture, how quickly the batteries die in the TV remote, missing out on yet another two-for-one sale on hand sanitizer—chances are you don't have much going on in your life to give a legitimate fuck about. And that's your real problem. Not the hand sanitizer. Not the TV remote.
4. I once heard an artist say that when a person has no problems, the mind automatically finds a way to invent some.

Finding Something Important and Meaningful

1. Finding something important and meaningful in your life is perhaps the most productive use of your time and energy. Because if you don't find that meaningful something, your fucks will be given to meaningless and frivolous causes. pain and loss are inevitable and we should let go of trying to resist them.

The Backwards Law

1. The idea that the more you pursue feeling better all the time, the less satisfied you become, as pursuing something only reinforces the fact that you lack it in the first place.
2. The more you desperately want to be rich, the more poor and unworthy you feel, regardless of how much money you actually make.

3. The more you desperately want to be sexy and desired, the uglier you come to see yourself, regardless of your actual physical appearance.

The Premise is the Problem

1. There is a premise that underlies a lot of our assumptions and beliefs. The premise is that happiness is algorithmic, that it can be worked for and earned and achieved as if it were getting accepted to law school or building a really complicated Lego set. If I achieve X, then I can be happy. If I look like Y, then I can be happy. If I can be with a person like Z, then I can be happy.
2. This premise, though, is the problem. Happiness is not a solvable equation. Dissatisfaction and unease are inherent parts of human nature and, as we'll see, necessary components to creating consistent happiness.

Suffering = Change

1. We suffer for the simple reason that suffering is biologically useful. It is nature's preferred agent for inspiring change. We have evolved to always live with a certain degree of dissatisfaction and insecurity, because it's the mildly dissatisfied and insecure creature that's going to do the most work to innovate and survive.
2. We are wired to become dissatisfied with whatever we have and satisfied by only what we do not have. This constant dissatisfaction has kept our species fighting and striving, building and conquering. So no—our own pain and misery aren't a bug of human evolution; they're a feature.

Happiness comes from solving problems

1. "Don't hope for a life without problems," the panda said. "There's no such thing. Instead, hope for a life full of good problems."
2. Happiness comes from solving problems. The keyword here is "solving." If you're avoiding your problems or feel like you don't have any problems, then you're going to make yourself miserable. If you feel like you have problems that you can't solve, you will likewise make yourself miserable.
3. The secret sauce is in the solving of the problems, not in not having problems in the first place.
4. True happiness occurs only when you find the problems you enjoy having and enjoy solving.
5. Whatever your problems are, the concept is the same: solve problems; be happy.

6. Unfortunately, for many people, life doesn't feel that simple. That's because they fuck things up in at least one of two ways:
 - a. 1. Denial. Some people deny that their problems exist in the first place. And because they deny reality, they must constantly delude or distract themselves from reality. This may make them feel good in the short term, but it leads to a life of insecurity, neuroticism, and emotional repression.
 - b. 2. Victim Mentality. Some choose to believe that there is nothing they can do to solve their problems, even when they in fact could. Victims seek to blame others for their problems or blame outside circumstances. This may make them feel better in the short term, but it leads to a life of anger, helplessness, and despair. People deny and blame others for their problems for the simple reason that it's easy and feels good, while solving problems is hard and often feels bad. Forms of blame and denial give us a quick high.
7. If you feel crappy it's because your brain is telling you that there's a problem that's unaddressed or unresolved. In other words, negative emotions are a call to action. When you feel them, it's because you're supposed to do something.
8. Positive emotions, on the other hand, are rewards for taking the proper action. When you feel them, life seems simple and there is nothing else to do but enjoy it. Then, like everything else, the positive emotions go away, because more problems inevitably emerge.

Material Success

1. Many people measure their self-worth based on how much money they make or what kind of car they drive or whether their front lawn is greener and prettier than the next-door neighbor's.
2. Research shows that once one is able to provide for basic physical needs (food, shelter, and so on), the correlation between happiness and worldly success quickly approaches zero. So if you're starving and living on the street in the middle of India, an extra ten thousand dollars a year would affect your happiness a lot. But if you're sitting pretty in the middle class in a developed country, an extra ten thousand dollars per year won't affect anything much—meaning that you're killing yourself working overtime and weekends for basically nothing.

Staying Positive

1. Then there are those who measure their lives by the ability to be positive about, well, pretty much everything. Lost your job? Great! That's an opportunity to explore your passions.

2. While there is something to be said for “staying on the sunny side of life,” the truth is, sometimes life sucks, and the healthiest thing you can do is admit it.
3. Denying negative emotions leads to experiencing deeper and more prolonged negative emotions and to emotional dysfunction.
4. Constant positivity is a form of avoidance, not a valid solution to life’s problems—problems which, by the way, if you’re choosing the right values and metrics, should be invigorating you and motivating you.
5. It’s simple, really: things go wrong, people upset us, accidents happen.

Good Healthy Values

1. Some examples of good, healthy values: honesty, innovation, vulnerability, standing up for oneself, standing up for others, self-respect, curiosity, charity, humility, creativity.
2. Some examples of bad, unhealthy values: 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,
3. When we have poor values—that is, poor standards we set for ourselves and others—we are essentially giving fucks about the things that don’t matter, things that in fact make our life worse.
4. But when we choose better values, we are able to divert our fucks to something better—toward things that matter, things that improve the state of our well-being and that generate happiness, pleasure, and success as side effects.
5. **This, in a nutshell, is what “self-improvement” is really about: prioritizing better values, choosing better things to give a fuck about.** Because when you give better fucks, you get better problems. And when you get better problems, you get a better life.

Five counterintuitive values

1. The first, which we’ll look at in the next chapter, is a radical form of responsibility: taking responsibility for everything that occurs in your life, regardless of who’s at fault.
2. The second is uncertainty: the acknowledgement of your own ignorance and the cultivation of constant doubt in your own beliefs.
3. The next is failure: the willingness to discover your own flaws and mistakes so that they may be improved upon.
4. The fourth is rejection: the ability to both say and hear no, thus clearly defining what you will and will not accept in your life.
5. The final value is the contemplation of one’s own mortality; this one is crucial, because paying vigilant attention to one’s own death is perhaps the only thing capable of helping us keep all our other values in proper perspective.

Blame

1. There's a difference between blaming someone else for your situation and that person's actually being responsible for your situation. Nobody else is ever responsible for your situation but you. Many people may be to blame for your unhappiness, but nobody is ever responsible for your unhappiness but you. This is because you always get to choose how you see things, how you react to things, how you value things. You always get to choose the metric by which to measure your experiences.

Luck

1. The beauty of poker is that while luck is always involved, luck doesn't dictate the long-term results of the game. A person can get dealt terrible cards and beat someone who was dealt great cards. Sure, the person who gets dealt great cards has a higher likelihood of winning the hand, but ultimately the winner is determined by—yup, you guessed it—the choices each player makes throughout play.
2. I see life in the same terms. We all get dealt cards. Some of us get better cards than others. And while it's easy to get hung up on our cards, and feel we got screwed over, the real game lies in the choices we make with those cards, the risks we decide to take, and the consequences we choose to live with. People who consistently make the best choices in the situations they're given are the ones who eventually come out ahead in poker, just as in life. And it's not necessarily the people with the best cards.
3. Uncertainty is the root of all progress and all growth. As the old adage goes, the man who believes he knows everything learns nothing. We cannot learn anything without first not knowing something. The more we admit we do not know, the more opportunities we gain to learn.
4. You avoid telling your friend that you don't want to see him anymore because ending the friendship would conflict with your identity as a nice, forgiving person.

How to Be a Little Less Certain of Yourself

1. 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:
 - a. Question #1: What if I'm wrong?

- b. Question #2: What would it mean if I were wrong?
- c. Question #3: Would being wrong create a better or a worse problem than my current problem, for both myself and others?

Don't just sit there. Do something. The answers will follow.

1. Whenever you're stuck on something, like solving a problem, or working out, the best way to get going is to just do *something*. Action creates motivation.
2. Action isn't just the effect of motivation; it's also the cause of it.
3. Action → Inspiration → Motivation
4. Action leads to inspiration which leads to motivation.
5. If you're waiting around for motivation to hit you to work out, or write a book, it will never happen. So just start doing it, even if it means just walking, which will eventually turn into running.

Don't be friends with people you don't really like

1. But, in the "free" West, my Russian teacher continued, there existed an abundance of economic opportunity—so much economic opportunity that it became far more valuable to present yourself in a certain way, even if it was false, than to actually be that way. Trust lost its value. Appearances and salesmanship became more advantageous forms of expression. Knowing a lot of people superficially was more beneficial than knowing a few people closely.
2. This is why it became the norm in Western cultures to smile and say polite things even when you don't feel like it, to tell little white lies and agree with someone whom you don't actually agree with. This is why people learn to pretend to be friends with people they don't actually like, to buy things they don't actually want. The economic system promotes such deception.
3. Reject all but the very best people and experiences and values in my life, and you will give your energy and attention to the people and projects that matter most to you. Stop wasting time on everything, and everyone else.

More is not always better

1. More is not always better. In fact, the opposite is true. We are actually often happier with less.
2. When we're overloaded with opportunities and options, we suffer from what psychologists refer to as the paradox of choice. Basically, the more options we're given, the less satisfied we become with whatever we choose, because we're aware of all the other options we're potentially forfeiting.
3. So if you have a choice between two places to live and pick one, you'll likely feel confident and comfortable that you made the right choice. You'll be satisfied with your decision. But if you have a choice among twenty-eight places to live and pick one, the paradox of choice says that you'll likely spend years agonizing, doubting, and second-guessing yourself, wondering if you really made the "right" choice, and if you're truly maximizing your own happiness. And this anxiety, this desire for certainty and perfection and success, will make you unhappy.

Everyone will die. What will you do with the time you have left?

1. Confronting the reality of our own mortality is important because it obliterates all the crappy, fragile, superficial values in life.
2. While most people whittle their days chasing another buck, or a little bit more fame and attention, or a little bit more assurance that they're right or loved, death confronts all of us with a far more painful and important question: What is your legacy? How will the world be different and better when you're gone? What mark will you have made? What influence will you have caused?
3. This is arguably the only truly important question in our life. Yet we avoid thinking about it. One, because it's hard. Two, because it's scary. Three, because we have no fucking clue what we're doing.
4. Bukowski once wrote, "We're all going to die, all of us. What a circus! That alone should make us love each other, but it doesn't. We are terrorized and flattened by life's trivialities; we are eaten up by nothing."