

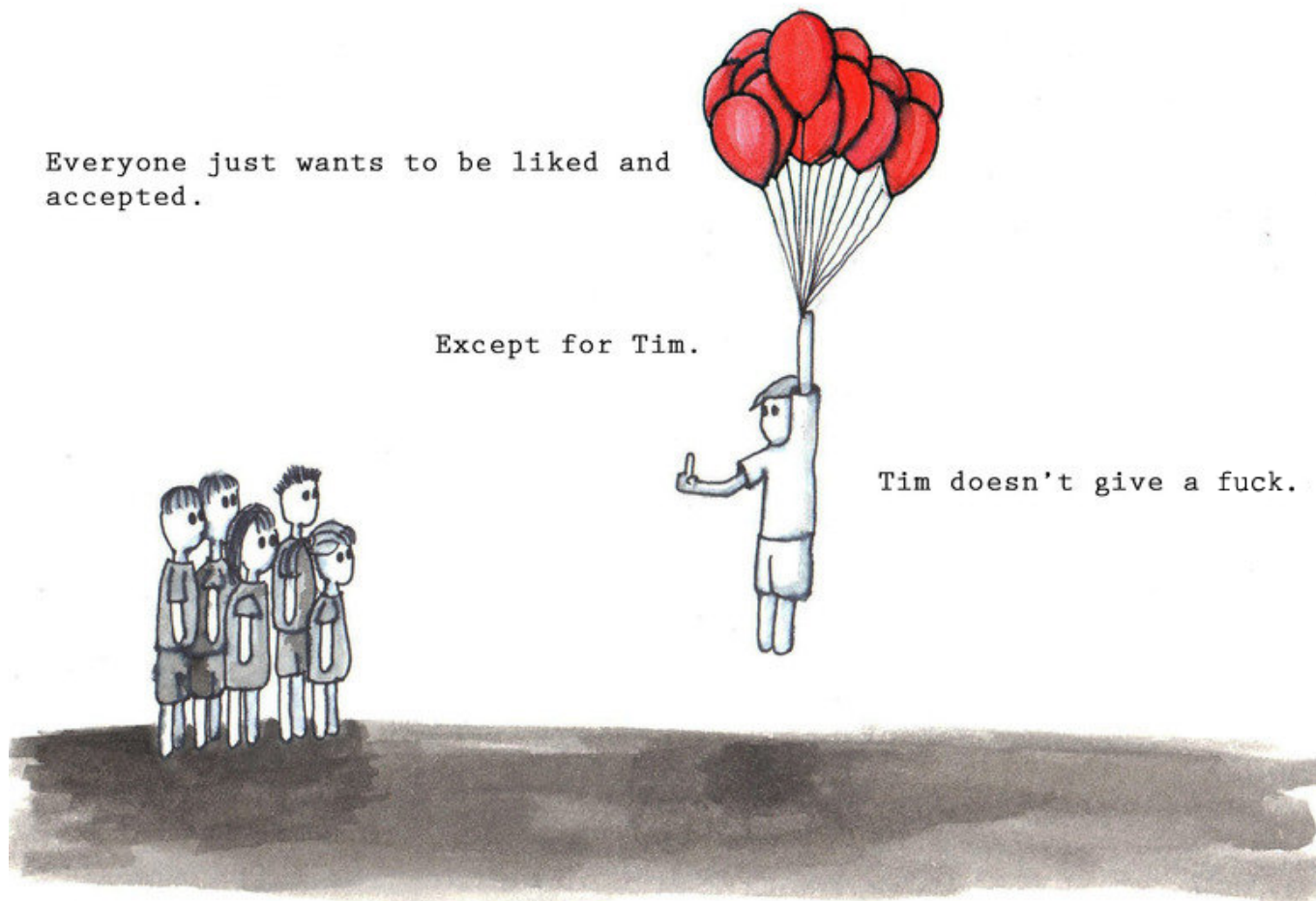
THE SUBTLE ART OF NOT GIVING A FUCK

January 8, 2015 12 minute read by Mark Manson

I n my life, I have given a fuck about many people and many things. I have also *not* given a fuck about many people and many things. And those fucks I have not given have made all the difference.

People often say the key to confidence and success in life is to simply “not give a fuck.” Indeed, we often refer to the strongest, most admirable people we know in terms of their lack of fucks given. Like “Oh, look at Susie working weekends again, she doesn’t give a fuck.” Or “Did you hear that Tom called the company president an asshole and still got a raise anyway? Holy shit, that dude does not give a fuck.” Or “Jason got up and ended his date with Cindy after 20 minutes. He said he wasn’t going to listen to her bullshit anymore. Man, that guy does not give a fuck.”

Chances are you know somebody in your life who, at one time or another, did not give a fuck and went on to accomplish amazing feats. Perhaps there was a time in your life where you simply did not give a fuck and excelled to some extraordinary heights. I know for myself, [quitting my day job](#) in finance after only six weeks and telling my boss that I was going to start selling dating advice online ranks pretty high up there in my own “didn’t give a fuck” hall of fame. Same with deciding to [sell most of my possessions](#) and move to [South America](#). Fucks given? None. Just went and did it.



Now, while not giving a fuck may seem simple on the surface, it's a whole new bag of burritos under the hood. I don't even know what that sentence means, but I don't give a fuck. A bag of burritos sounds awesome, so let's just go with it.

The point is, most of us struggle throughout our lives by giving too many fucks in situations where fucks do not deserve to be given. We give a fuck about the rude gas station attendant who gave us too many nickels. We give a fuck when a show we liked was canceled on TV. We give a fuck when our coworkers don't bother asking us about our awesome weekend. We give a fuck when it's raining and we were supposed to go jogging in the morning.

Fucks given everywhere. Strewn about like seeds in mother-fucking spring time. And for what purpose? For what reason? Convenience? Easy comforts? A pat on the fucking back maybe?

This is the problem, my friend.

Because when we give too many fucks, when we choose to give a fuck about everything, then we feel as though we are perpetually entitled to feel comfortable and happy at all times, that's when life fucks us.

Indeed, the ability to reserve our fucks for only the most fuckworthy of situations would surely make life a hell of a lot easier. Failure would be less terrifying. Rejection less painful. Unpleasant necessities more pleasant and the unsavory [shit sandwiches](#) a little bit more savory. I mean, if we could only give a few less fucks, or a few more consciously-directed fucks, then life would feel pretty fucking easy.

What we don't realize is that there is a fine art of non-fuck-giving. People aren't just born not giving a fuck. In fact, we're born giving way too many fucks. Ever watch a kid cry his eyes out because his hat is the wrong shade of blue? Exactly. Fuck that kid.

Developing the ability to control and manage the fucks you give is the essence of strength and integrity. We must craft and hone our lack of fuckery over the course of years and decades. Like a fine wine, our fucks must age into a fine vintage, only uncorked and given on the most special fucking occasions.

This may sound easy. But it is not. Most of us, most of the time, get sucked in by life's mean trivialities, steamrolled by its unimportant

dramas; we live and die by the sidenotes and distractions and vicissitudes that suck the fucks out of us like [Sasha Grey](#) in the middle of a gangbang.

This is no way to live, man. So stop fucking around. Get your fucks together. And here, allow me to fucking show you.

SUBTLETY #1: NOT GIVING A FUCK DOES NOT MEAN BEING INDIFFERENT; IT MEANS BEING COMFORTABLE WITH BEING DIFFERENT

When most people envision giving no fucks whatsoever, they envision a kind of perfect and serene indifference to everything, a calm that weathers all storms.

This is misguided. There's absolutely nothing admirable or confident about indifference. People who are indifferent are lame and scared. They're couch potatoes and internet trolls. In fact, indifferent people often attempt to be indifferent because in reality they actually give too many fucks. They are afraid of the world and the repercussions of their own choices. Therefore, they make none. They hide in a grey emotionless pit of their own making, self-absorbed and self-pitied, perpetually distracting themselves from this unfortunate thing demanding their time and energy called life.

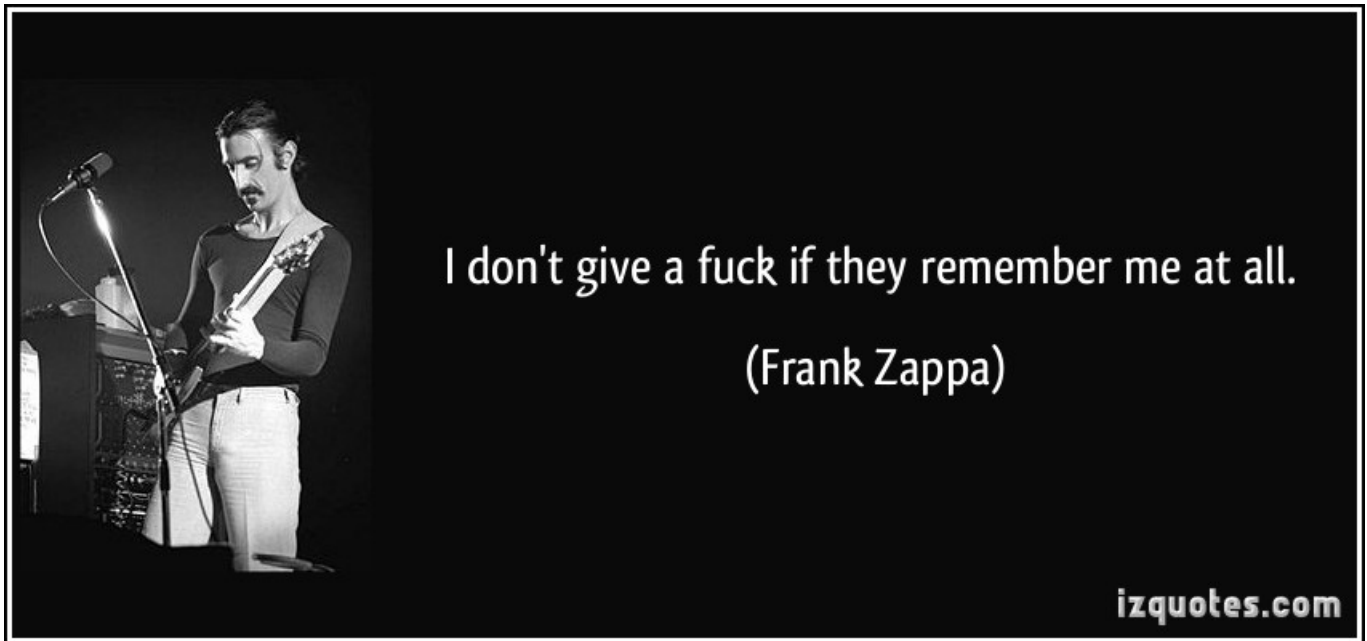
My mother was recently screwed out of a large chunk of money by a close friend of hers. Had I been indifferent, I would have shrugged my shoulders, sipped some mocha and downloaded another season of *The Wire*. Sorry mom.

But instead, I was indignant. I was pissed off. I said, “No, screw that mom, we’re going to lawyer the fuck up and go after this asshole. Why? Because I don’t give a fuck. I will ruin this guy’s life if I have to.”

This illustrates the first subtlety about not giving a fuck. When we say, “Damn, watch out, Mark Manson just don’t give a fuck,” we don’t mean that Mark Manson doesn’t care about anything; on the contrary, what we mean is that Mark Manson doesn’t care about adversity in the face of his goals, he doesn’t care about pissing some people off to do what he feels is right or important or noble. What we mean is that Mark Manson is the type of guy who would write about himself in third person and use the word ‘fuck’ in an article 127 different times just because he thought it was the right thing to do. He just doesn’t give a fuck.

This is what is so admirable — no, not me, dumbass — the overcoming adversity stuff. The staring failure in the face and shoving your middle finger back at it. The people who don’t give a fuck about adversity or failure or embarrassing themselves or shitting the bed a few times. The people who just laugh and then do it anyway. Because they know it’s right. They know it’s more important than them and their own feelings and their own pride and their own needs. They say “Fuck it,” not to everything in life, but rather they say “Fuck it” to *everything unimportant in life*. They reserve their fucks for what truly fucking matters. Friends. Family. *Purpose*. Burritos. And an occasional lawsuit or two. And because of that, because they reserve their fucks for only

the big things, the important things, people give a fuck about them in return.



SUBTLETY #2: TO NOT GIVE A FUCK ABOUT ADVERSITY, YOU MUST FIRST GIVE A FUCK ABOUT SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN ADVERSITY

Eric Hoffer once wrote: “A man is likely to mind his own business when it is worth minding. When it is not, he takes his mind off his own meaningless affairs by minding other people’s business.”

The problem with people who hand out fucks like ice cream at a

goddamn summer camp is that they don't have anything more fuckworthy to dedicate their fucks to.

Think for a second. You're at a grocery store. And there's an elderly lady screaming at the cashier, berating him for not accepting her 30-cent coupon. Why does this lady give a fuck? It's just 30 cents.

Well, I'll tell you why. That old lady probably doesn't have anything better to do with her days than to sit at home cutting out coupons all morning. She's old and lonely. Her kids are dickheads and never visit. She hasn't had sex in over 30 years. Her pension is on its last legs and she's probably going to die in a diaper thinking she's in Candyland. She can't fart without extreme lower back pain. She can't even watch TV for more than 15 minutes without falling asleep or forgetting the main plotline.

So she snips coupons. That's all she's got. It's her and her damn coupons. All day, every day. It's all she can give a fuck about because there is nothing else to give a fuck about. And so when that pimply-faced 17-year-old cashier refuses to accept one of them, when he defends his cash register's purity the way knights used to defend maidens' virginities, you can damn well bet granny is going to erupt and verbally hulk smash his fucking face in. Eighty years of fucks will rain down all at once, like a fiery hailstorm of "Back in my day" and "People used to show more respect" stories, boring the world around her to tears in her creaking and wobbly voice.

If you find yourself consistently giving too many fucks about trivial shit that bothers you — your ex-girlfriend's new Facebook picture, how quickly the batteries die in the TV remote, missing out on yet another 2-for-1 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.



Way too many fucks given.

In life, our fucks must be spent on something. There really is no such thing as not giving a fuck. The question is simply how we each choose to allot our fucks. You only get a limited number of fucks to give over your lifetime, so you must spend them with care. As my father used to say, “Fucks don’t grow on trees, Mark.” OK, he never actually said that. But fuck it, pretend like he did. The point is that fucks have to be earned and then invested wisely. Fucks are cultivated like a beautiful fucking garden, where if you fuck shit up and the fucks get fucked, then you’ve fucking fucked your fucks all the fuck up.

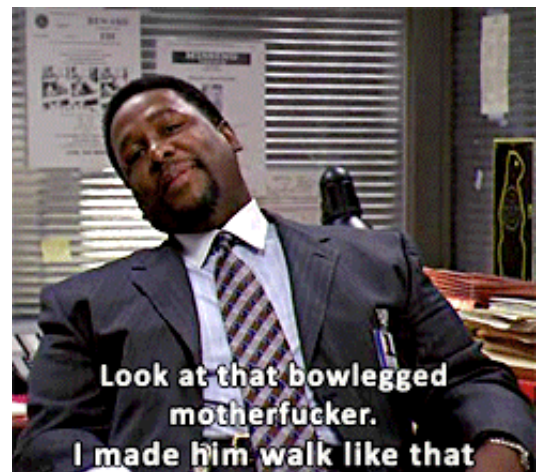
SUBTLETY #3: WE ALL HAVE A

LIMITED NUMBER OF FUCKS TO GIVE; PAY ATTENTION TO WHERE AND WHO YOU GIVE THEM TO

When we're young, we have tons of energy. Everything is new and exciting. And everything seems to matter so much. Therefore, we give tons of fucks. We give a fuck about everything and everyone — about what people are saying about us, about whether that cute boy/girl called us back or not, about whether our socks match or not or what color our birthday balloon is.

As we get older, we gain experience and begin to notice that most of these things have little lasting impact on our lives. Those people's opinions we cared about so much before have long been removed from our lives. We've found the love we need and so those embarrassing romantic rejections cease to mean much anymore. We realize how little people pay attention to the superficial details about us and we focus on doing things more for ourselves rather than for others.

Essentially, we become more selective about the fucks we're willing to give. This is something called 'maturity.' It's nice, you should try it sometime. Maturity is what happens when one learns to only give a fuck about what's truly fuckworthy. As Bunk Moreland said in *The Wire* (which, fuck you, I still

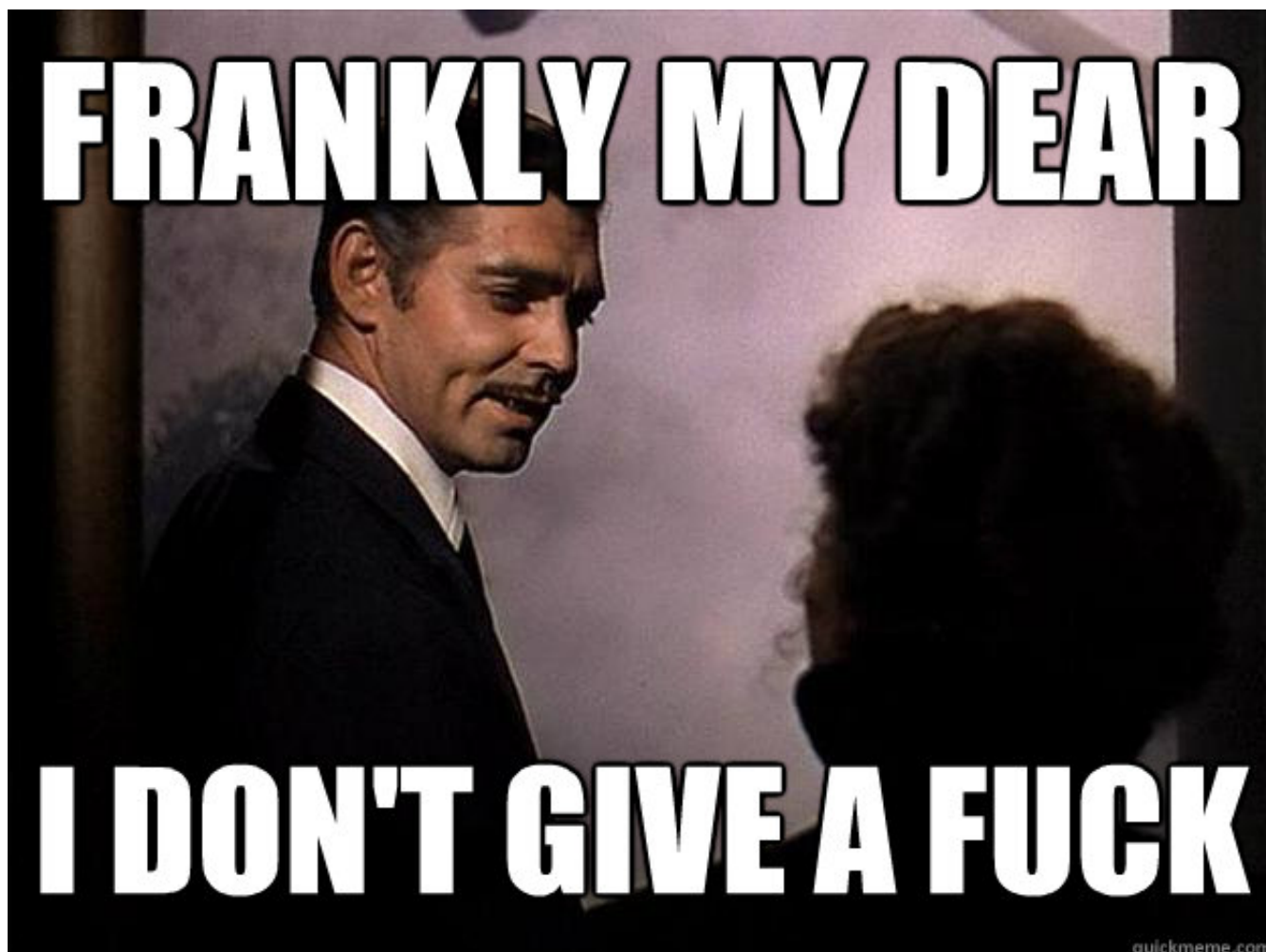


downloaded it) to his partner Detective McNulty: “That’s what you get for giving a fuck when it wasn’t your turn to give a fuck.”

Bunk Moreland, not giving a fuck since 2002.

Then, as we grow older and enter middle age, something else begins to change. Our energy levels drop. Our identities solidify. We know who we are and we no longer have a desire to change what now seems inevitable in our lives.

And in a strange way, this is liberating. We no longer need to give a fuck about everything. Life is just what it is. We accept it, warts and all. We realize that we’re never going to cure cancer or go to the moon or feel Jennifer Aniston’s tits. And that’s OK. Life fucking goes on. We now reserve our ever-dwindling fucks only for the most truly fuckworthy parts of our lives: our families, our best friends, our golf swing. And to our astonishment, *this is enough*. This simplification actually makes us **really fucking happy**.



Then somehow, one day, much later, we wake up and we're old. And along with our gum lines and our sex drive, our ability to give a fuck has receded to the point of non-existence. In the twilight of our days, we carry out a paradoxical existence where we no longer have the energy to give a fuck about the big things in life, and instead we must dedicate the few fucks we have left to the simple and mundane yet increasingly difficult aspects of our lives: where to eat lunch, doctors appointments for our creaky joints, 30-cent discounts at the supermarket, and driving without drifting to sleep and killing a parking lot full of orphans. You know, practical concerns.

Then one day, on our deathbed, (hopefully) surrounded by the people we gave the majority of our fucks to throughout our life, and those few who still give a fuck about us, with a silent gasp we will gently let our

last fuck go. Through the tears and the gently fading beeps of the heart monitor and the ever-dimming fluorescence encapsulating us in its divine hospital halo, we drift into some unknowable and unfuckable place.