



Jake 02:21

Thank you, Mark, for joining me on the show today, I really appreciate you taking the time, I think a lot of people are familiar with your name, or at the very least familiar with your book, the subtle art of not giving a fuck, you've written a few now. But that's the one that really took off for, I think probably launched you into, you know, everything that came thereafter and just sold tons and tons of copies worldwide. I think there's actually the most read nonfiction book in the world and 2017. So and you've been writing for a long time, of course, between the blog and these few books, but I actually came across you on on big cloud, and it reminded me of the book and I reached out and you were kind enough to share the time. So appreciate you coming on today.

Mark Manson 03:03

Absolutely. It's good to be here.

Jake 03:06

Great. So I think, you know, like I said, a lot of people are familiar with the book and with you. But for those who aren't. And even those who know the book, but don't necessarily know that much value would be great to start by sort of going back as early as you're willing to start and just telling your story on it's a really interesting one. And I would love to sort of pry into different chapters, both before and since you've had the best selling book.

Mark Manson 03:30

Sure. Um, so you know, I never intended to be an author or even a best selling author. I actually when I was in university, I played a lot of poker and and so I thought I was going to go into finance and graduated, got a job at an investment bank, as an analyst and fucking hated it. Like hated every second of it. And it was around that time I had started like a blog, like blogs were kind of blowing up and becoming like the cool thing to do back then this is like 2007 and around that time, I came across Tim Ferriss book four hour workweek, and it you know, it described the basics of setting up an online business and automating everything and I was like, Man, this is, this is great. I'm gonna quit my job, I'm gonna go do this, like, just thinking it would be as easy as you know. You know, like switching



lanes in a car or something. And so I put in my two weeks I was in at the investment bank for like a total of six to eight weeks. My manager actually told me, he was like, you haven't been here long enough to like, put in two weeks so you can just go now. I was like, Okay. So I went home and, you know, started redesigning my blog decided I was going to turn it into one of these online businesses and had a bunch of money that I'd saved up from poker, you know, over the years and within a year went broke a startup tried to launch like three or four different ecommerce websites, affiliate websites, multiple blogs, I spent some time trying to program scripts that would scour like aggregate news from Twitter, like I tried, like absolutely everything. And very strangely, the one thing that stuck was I still had this whole time, I still had my personal blog, where I talked about my personal life, which was mostly just like, my failures in dating. And so for some reason, that was the thing that started to catch on. That was the thing that started to generate traffic. And so I started finding ways to monetize it. And you know, by like, 2010, I mean, by this point, I had, like, move back in with my mom and was like, sleeping on couches and things like that. But by 2010 2011, I, I've managed to build, like, a full time living as a blogger, and started living abroad and doing the whole comparison thing. And that additionally, was dating advice was the business. So I spent years writing, studying relationships, dating, answering people's questions, responding to people's questions. And then around 2012 2013, you know, I kind of got I realized, like, I don't want to be doing this for the rest of my life. So. And I also realized that 90% of people who have problems with their dating or relationships, what they really have problems with is themselves like they have it's, there's not really such thing, such a thing as like a dating problem, it's, it's like people have their own emotional problems that they project onto their dating life and like cause problems in their dating life. So it's like I should just be writing about people's personal problems and all the shit that they don't deal with. So I rebranded the website you know, restarted everything kind of rebranded is like a just a generic Self Help site, but I wanted it to be very, like I wanted to stay like be contrarian basically, like I didn't really buy into the classic cliched self help stuff of be positive. And believe in yourself, I thought a lot of that was bullshit. So I wanted to write like kind of just a very gritty, realistic approach to dealing with a lot of



personal problems. And I made that switch in 2013. And the site just exploded. I mean, it was within a year, it was getting 2 million visitors each month, I grew an email list to over half a million people. I had like, eight or 10 articles go super viral on social media. And it was around that time that you know, and I had video courses and online courses, a whole sales funnel built. And it was around that time that that agents and publishers came, came knocking and asking if I wanted to write a book, and I was like, Sure, why not? Like, that'd be cool. And then that book was seller, not giving a fuck, which is now gone on and sold, like 12 million copies or whatever. But, uh, it was all kind of like, it's very interesting, because I think in the publishing world, which is now the world that I spend most my time in, it's, you know, most traditionally, authors, especially successful authors, it's like, it's like something that since they were like, 15, they're like, I'm going to be a successful author, and I'm going to focus on writing. And I think one thing that's changed the last few years is that there's kind of this new school of younger authors, especially nonfiction authors, who are background is actually very entrepreneurial. It's like, it's the internet, you know, so it's like people like me and Ryan Holiday and James clear. And, and Tim Ferriss, like, it's, we've kind of market tested our ideas before we go before we do the book. And so it's kind of like, we approach our work, I guess, in the same way that like, a startup would approach a product, you know, it's something you do the beta on your, on your website, or on Twitter, and then you like, get feedback and then you like, you know, put the pitch together and blah, blah, blah. So that's kind of where I'm at. You know, I've done all I've done another book since then. I just co authored Will Smith's book, which is coming out in November. Still got the website, the newsletter and everything, but Like, that's basically who I am, or why people would have heard of me.

Jake 10:05

Yeah, no, I appreciate it. It's an awesome story. And the beginning has, you know, the investment banking and the quitting and the Tim Ferriss book. I knew about the banking from doing my diligence, I didn't know about the Ferriss book, but it's like, weird how much overlap. It has, it was just my own story. I won't, you know, spent too much time on it. But the short of it is like I did banking a



little longer than six weeks, I did it for like two years, coming out of school. And then I sort of decided I wanted to quit, but it was actually the, the Tim Ferriss book, you know, reading it long after the fact, just a couple years ago now, which gave me like, the final kick was like, like, this is a totally reversible decision, there's really nothing to be worried about. And just go ahead and do it. So it's really interesting to hear that, that that book actually played a part in your in your story as well. So you quit banking, I want to just, you know, touch on a couple things, sort of along the path, because I think they're really interesting. You quit banking, you try to start an online business, Did you pack up like right away and go travel the world or you started back home, how were like the early days of trying to start an internet business alongside the blog.

Mark Manson 11:17

I didn't pack up right away. I had some money in the bank, but I wanted to make sure that I got traction with something first. And, you know, it's funny, like the four hour workweek thing. I think I think I even told him, this was like, the one time I met him, like, it's, I have such a love hate relationship with that book and what it did in my life, because on the one hand, it like, inspired me to leave the bank. But on the other hand, part of the reason it inspired me is because it made it sound so fucking easy. And stuff like, and, but it's this weird paradox where, like, if it didn't make it sound so easy, I probably wouldn't have had the courage to do it. So, you know, like, I've just very naively thought, like, Oh, I just need like, maybe three or four months to get a web business going. And then and then upset. You know, like, as, as we all know, like, it's no you have, it takes like a year or two to get to, like, get anything going, if you're fortunate, you know, so. And, of course, you never worked four hours a week in my life, it's like, those first few years, especially, it was more like 12 to 16 hours a day, to get things up and going. So it's, um, it was it was actually those first couple years were very arduous and and I think I like you, part of my inspiration was like, This is completely reversible, like, there's no, like the difference between a 23 year old with no employment experience and a 25 year old, with no employment experiences, like basically nothing, so I have nothing to lose. But it was like, once I got about a year in a lot of it was just honestly purely motivated by



pride, like I had gotten, you know, my friends and family, I think, all kind of just thought I was just fucking up and, and I just, I kind of, like, got to this space where I'm like, I don't care what it takes, like, I'm gonna do it. And I, if that requires working all day, every day starting like 10 websites, and just to find one that actually gets traffic and makes money. I'll do that. And that's what I did.

Jake 13:27

Yeah, and so you're grinding real hard on all these startups trying to make them work, try and find like product market fit and just figure out how the hell Tim Ferriss is only working four hours a week, if that was in fact the case. And, you know, none of them are really working, but the blog, sort of sneakily this thing that you've just been doing on the side for so long, I'm like dating no less is just sort of the thing that ends up catching on somewhat organically and then maybe, you know, throw some fun logs in the fire once you start to realize that or whatever, you're able to monetize the blog enough to then have this like, financial freedom, I'm assuming you know, you're doing like, again, sort of the the Ferris playbook of like, really minimizing your your costs and going and living in places like Thailand and South America or whatever. So what was that like when you finally got to, you know, you had something that was clicking and working, and you had that chance? Like, I'm assuming past this point, your friends and family are like, Alright, I think he actually figured something out and landed honestly. Yeah, it looks pretty good, like on the beach of Costa Rica, or whatever it is. So like, what what was that next chapter like for you live in all around the world?

Mark Manson 14:39

I mean, the next chapter was great. It's funny because the friends came around very quickly, you know, so it's, if you can imagine it's, you know, all my friends are 2526 and they're, they're kind of like in year two or three of their their desk job. And and suddenly like I'm showing up, you know, on beaches in Costa Rica and Argentina, like I still wasn't making great money. But back then at least, like it was still those places were still very cheap. Like you could live very well and Argentina and 1500 a month. So it was, you know, and I was single and 25, or whatever. Yeah, it was a blast. Like, honestly,



those the first couple years living that way, like, some of the best years of my life, I loved it.

Jake 15:27

So you ended up doing it for about seven, I think because you live, I read somewhere you lived in like 50 countries, almost a dozen for like quite a long time. What were, like, you know, was that I imagine that eye opening to some extent, you know, I've done a little bit of traveling, which is pretty, you know, it just like expands your perspective a bit, I think it's, you know, at the very least, it's a good bit of fun, like, where were some of the places that you got to live or even just visit that sort of left an impression with you or made a difference sort of, for the rest of, you know, your path thereafter?

Mark Manson 16:07

Well, of the seven, I ended up spending about two and a half in Brazil, mainly because I met my wife there. And so I actually moved to Brazil and lived there for quite a while. So I mean, I have to say Brazil, just because at this point, that's kind of my second home. But I spent a year in Colombia, I really loved Colombia. I spent a lot of time in Thailand, obviously love Thailand, for all the reasons people love Thailand. You know, in terms of like, just kind of making an impression on me. It's interesting, because a lot of the places that that made kind of a lasting impact, where we're actually some of the less pleasant places to be, you know, so for instance, I spent a month a month in India in 2011. And India's like, a rough place to go, especially if you're backpacking through the countryside, and, you know, it's like, anybody who's been like, knows it's a pretty rough place, but it is so eye opening and, and beyond just the poverty, it's just like the, for me, it was like the density of people, you know, and like, just how how, like, it just kind of blows up all your preconceived notions of what is required to to live in a community. China was very powerful because it was so I found it so alienating I'd never it China was like, I've never been like, I've never been somewhere where people can live. So completely different than what I think is normal and like, still be like, functional and happy. And, you know, everything. It's it's just very eye opening to see stuff like that Russia is kind of similar to. But yeah, I mean, it's, you



know, initially early on, it was mostly about partying, and like seeing beaches, and like, Oh my god, I got to go to like, I don't know, I got to go to Ibiza, or a full moon party. You know, as the years went on, it started to become more culturally enriching and kind of like diving into, like expanding my understanding of humanity, I suppose. And then I would say the last couple years, I hit, I hit a point of like, severe diminishing returns, which is like, once you've been to, like 50 countries, the 51st doesn't really feel novel anymore. There's not really anything unexpected or, and so yet, you're still like putting in all this time, energy and money to go there. So it the lifestyle definitely has a time limit on it. From what I found, and from people I know, who've done it as well, and I probably did it a year or two too long. I probably would have stopped sooner if I hadn't lived in Brazil. So. But yeah, it's it's one of those things like good. One of the best things I ever did, but would never go do it again.

Jake 19:14

Yeah, I think it's nice to build a lifetime of those types of experiences, I think. And if you if you have to send one for a year or two too long, it's not the not the worst thing in the world, I think. But yeah, so you're doing that. And you sort of, you know, that runs its course. How did you know, I understand how it became clear that like it was time to like, settle down somewhere, you know, come back to the states and stop traveling all over the world for so many years. But how did you What was it obvious to you that you would always come back to the states and then you know, secondarily to that been here, I'm assuming for the majority of the time since if not all of it. Would you ever just based on seeing like a lot of people I think You know, certainly like people, you know, I'm very fortunate, like, I've been able to travel quite a bit on the, in my, you know, late 20s now and seen several countries and been all over the been all over America and things like that, and Europe and whatnot. But a lot of people sort of grow up wherever they're born. And, you know, maybe they go to college and nearby, bigger city or bigger town or whatever, and then come back and work like, wherever, but some people like go their whole lives without ever leaving the state or the town. And then others, you know, more commonly, like, they might go to a different state or a different city or whatever, maybe they end up settling down where they



went to school or something like that. But they leave the country a few times for a few vacations or whatever, over the course of their lifetime. When you have the opportunity to see 50 different countries, you have a much better sense, I think of what's out there. Has it ever, you know, you lived in Brazil for a couple of years, I understand. But have you ever thought on a longer term basis that you might like to, you know, there's somewhere else that just has a better way of life, than the states that you might like to, you know, spend a good chunk of your life even, you know, after where we are today?

Mark Manson 21:14

Yeah, absolutely. It's funny, because I actually thought for a number of years that I wouldn't come back to the States, I thought, I thought I figured I would settle down, either somewhere in Europe or like Australia. I was actually quite negative on the states. For most of my most of my ironically, up until recently, I was very negative on the states, I'm strangely become more positive on the states in the last couple years, which I think is is as contrarian as you can get these days.

Jake 21:47

I was gonna say that that goes pretty well with your brand.

Mark Manson 21:52

Yeah, so I mean, I think looking back, I think I was a very, it was almost a cliché of like a disgruntled over educated millennial. And, you know, I grew up with 911, and a bunch of my friends went off to Iraq and Afghanistan, and you know, and then I graduate into the the job market of Oh, eight. So it was like everything, my entire adolescence and early adulthood, it was just, everything was getting worse all the time, and nothing seemed to ever be getting better. And so I became pretty, pretty staunchly negative. And then also having that experience. I mean, I just think I think objectively, in terms of pure quality of life, like there, there are a number of places that that the quality of life is just better than us. Like, I don't think that's like, I think the average Australian or the average Swede, you know, objectively lives better than the average American, I don't think that's really debatable. And so when I was traveling all these places, I just kind of figured, like, full shit, why wouldn't I go



live in Australia or Sweden or something? But so the thing that's changed, I mean, the reason I did come back to the US is I married a Brazilian and you know, it's after living in Brazil for a couple years. I mean, I love Brazil, but it's, it's like, even even Brazilians, listening to this will understand that if you have a choice between the Brazil and the US, like, it's gonna be us 10 times out of 10. And so, you know, once she and I got married, it was kind of a choice of like, okay, either I become a resident down there, or she becomes a resident up here. So we chose the US and we came back. And I kind of begrudgingly, you know, made the US my home again, and I was still very disgruntled. But the thing, the thing that I'm kind of coming around on with the US, I've gotten much more bullish on the US last few years. And I for a couple reasons. One is even though the adaptability of the US is like agonizingly slow, you know, there's that famous Churchill quote, that you can always count on the Americans to do the right thing after they've done everything else. It's, it's an exhaust, it's like, it's just a painfully slow and inefficient adaptability, here, but there is an adaptability here that is really remarkable, especially, you know, like once, if you look in the context of world history, and you know, the size and diversity of the country and everything. The other thing is just like, the same way, I think it's not really debatable that the quality of life is better in other places. I don't think it's really debatable that the business opportunities are the best in the world here. And so, you know, being in my 30s, kind of the prime of my career, you know, got this huge book that's taken off a really successful way. Business I'm you know, I'm getting involved, I'm like investing in other people's businesses, I'm doing books with other people, I'm, you know, finding all like all sorts of like cool opportunities and all these different industries, like, it's, there's no other place that that happens. So if you're, if that's a big value for you and your life, like, this is the place you want to be. And so I've come, I've come around to respect that a lot more, especially now that I've actually tried to do business and some other countries are like gone and done events in other countries and things like that. So I think I think the US is great. You know, one thing I tell my foreign friends is I say, like, if you, if you want to buy something, or sell something, the US is the best place in the world, if you just want to chill and have like, a really peaceful life, and like, you know, not have to stress or worry



about things, you're better off somewhere else. But it's like, that's just that's one of the prices we pay for the dynamism and and, you know, innovation that happens here.

Jake 26:08

Right, yeah, I'm going to use that, if you'll entertain it to segue to your book, he talked about like how, you know, it's sort of an objectively better, you know, like quality of life. And in places like Australia, in Sweden, you can just sort of like chill and like, not have to worry as much, maybe the business opportunities aren't quite as good, but just like more, you know, relaxing, less stressful way of life, one of the concepts that sort of stuck with me from your book was basically, you know, everyone's going to have, that there's nothing you can really do to like, not have anything ever to worry about, like, no matter what is going on in your life, you're going to find something to worry about. And you just want to the thing that I think people misinterpret, you know, I love the title, like, it's, it's great if it catches the eye and everything like that, but I think people see the title. And they assume your book is about, like, not caring about anything, right? Yeah, but it's, it's not that at all. And that's actually what I assumed going in as well. And I was like, and frankly, like, by the time I read your book, it was so popular that I sort of like you and a little have like a little bit of a contrarian gene. And so something super popular, I like almost have a, you know, I tried to be open minded, but I'm, like, inclined to, like, be a skeptic about it. And so I start reading your book, and I'm like, this guy's gonna, he's gonna be like, you know, stop caring about everything. And magically, you'll be successful or something. And then I get to, like, you know, it's like, by by the end of the first chapter, I'm like, Damn, like, this is, I love this, it's like, you know, it's not saying don't care about anything, it's saying, you have to be really selective about what you care about. Because otherwise the, you know, society and commercials and your friends and Instagram, all these things combined are going to sort of choose for you, and you're not going to like, the way that that ends up. So coming back to the point, I guess, talking about like an objectively better quality of life. And in places like Australia, do you think that's there's part of that where it's just, you know, like, as an American used to sort of like American ways, that looks better. But if you actually



spend enough time there, you'd have your own, like, Australian concerns to worry about? Or how do you think about all of that?

Mark Manson 28:31

Well, well, okay, there's like two things. I'll answer this in two parts, one kind of the book piece. And then the other one, the Australia question. You know, the, the book was very intentionally designed, you know, the title is like a Trojan horse. It's, it's the kind of, you know, everybody's stressed these days, everybody's anxious, everybody's burnt out. And so the title kind of like tricks that that person into thinking that it's going to resolve all their stress or anxiety, but really, you know, the, the deeper and more important question, you know, is, is, what are you choosing to value? Like, what are your priorities, essentially, and I think, I strongly believe that this is like the fundamental question of our age, you know, because we have access to all the information in the world, we have access to all the people in the world, we have access to so many opportunities and ideas. It's a legitimate question of like, where do you spend your limited amount of attention and focus? And I think that's an extremely difficult and stressful question that most of us are not aware that we're trying to navigate. And so the book kind of uses this idea of, of not giving a fuck as a way to kind of trick people into thinking about this of like, what are you choosing the care about? Like, where are you like you have such a limited amount of attention compared to the amount information that's out there, where are you choosing to invest it. And so it's just trying to bring the light a lot of these questions that I think are still not really being talked about enough. So that's kind of the book piece. One of the points that the book makes, which you use summarize nicely is that you're never gonna find a life without problems or without struggles, like it's anything that solves one struggle simply creates a different type of struggle, like the human mind is kind of just pre programmed to always be mildly dissatisfied, because that's what's evolutionarily beneficial for us. So the bringing the question that to the Australia thing is like, ultimately, it's a question of values, right? So it's like, if you're, if your supreme value in your life is freedom of commerce, entrepreneurialism, you know, if that's where you base most of your self esteem, and your happiness and your sense of meaning and self worth, then yeah, maybe maybe the US ends up being better for



you. But it's, you know, when I say objectively, a better quality of life, like, I really just mean on like, basic kind of health and mental health metrics, you know, so life expectancy, you know, rates of gun violence, violent crime, suicides, stuff like that, you know, it's just, and when you go spend time in these places, too, it's like, you see why, like, they they've got functional health care systems that take care of everybody they've got, you know, their education systems are more equitable, you know, so it's, it's, they kind of, they give up, like, one way that my friend put it to me this this way, once, which I really liked. He said, He's like, the US is like, the high stakes poker table of the world. Like, if you're one of the best, or smartest people, you want to be sitting at that table, because it's going to reward you proportionally, like more proportionally to your talent. But if you're not a great poker player, you're much better off at a lower steak table. And, and that's fine. Like, there's nothing wrong with a lower steak table, like a lot of these low the values in these these other countries, they've chosen to sacrifice, rewarding innovation at the top ends for you know, just providing a much better all around quality of life, you know, for the majority in the middle. That's fine. Like, it's just, it just it is what it is, right? So part of it's a value judgment, like, yeah, obviously, people in Australia, like have problems, and they fucking struggle, and they get pissed off at the government and they have their healthcare system fucks up like, every place has problems. It's just a question of, you know, for me, it I used to frame the question to myself in terms of, I have a set of values and priorities in my life, Which country's culture best matches those priorities and values. And, and I still think that the US in the long run, the US probably doesn't match me perfectly, or as well as some other places. But at least at this point in my life, especially like, kind of when I'm like, peeking in terms of ambition and productivity. It matches well enough. And I'm and I'm very happy to be here.

Jake 33:31

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And it's a great, great perspective. I love the poker table analogy. I think that makes a lot of sense. And a lot of people can sort of sympathize a lot of people, I think can really quickly determine like, if they want to be at the high stakes poker table or not. Like I consider my some myself someone who does. I



know a lot of people who would say, you know, I'm all set. So yeah, and maybe Australia would be great. So I think that's, that's a great analogy, I want to dig deeper into this. This point from the book, which you just touched on as well, which is like, you know, the importance of choosing your struggle, given the assumption that like, everyone's gonna have some sort of struggle, you know, that there's value in choosing it. And also, you have this great part in the book, which is like, a chosen struggle is actually and you know, excuse me, if I'm butchering this at all, but it's like a chosen struggle basically, is it's, there's something just more enjoyable about it for whatever reason, or more, you get, like a greater sense of meaning from it or, or like, I'm having trouble putting into words, but it's just better than sort of a struggle that's feels like it's imposed upon you. I think the challenge with choosing your struggle now it's like, at least twofold. One is that to your point, like there's just infinite things that you could sort of, there's infinite directions to go. There's your So much information everywhere and distractions everywhere. So distractions is like the second point, it's like, the first point is like, there's infinite things to choose from. And the second challenge is like, while you have this choice among infinite things, you have infinite things, distracting you, and, you know, bringing you and pulling you towards doing things other than just like sitting down quietly in a room, or however you want to go about it, and really thinking like, Okay, what do I actually want to do? How do you think about like, I guess, how, what was your experience? I don't know, if there was like, I'm assuming at some point, sort of before writing the book, some of these things had been like personal for you, where you had maybe chosen your struggles at some point. Like, obviously, you don't not care about anything, you can't like, you've become this super successful author, among other things. And you obviously had to care about that at some point. How did you go about sort of, or, you know, how, whether it's your personal sort of technique or strategy or just advice for others? In a world of infinite options and infinite distractions? How do you think about choosing your struggle?

Mark Manson 36:13

Yeah, I think I think there's, there's a lot a lot to unpack there, you know, one of the, I guess, core arguments of of subtle art is that



is two things, one, kind of the thing that you pointed out, which is, you know, it starts early in the book by saying, its struggles inevitable. Like, there's no such thing as a life without struggle, like it's even you, you can accomplish all your goals, make all the money you want, buy the nicest house, have a great partner, whatever, there's always going to be problems. And the question is, is, are those problems that you are happy to have or not? You know, so I think one of the one of the lines that I use that I use in the book is I say, like a Warren Buffett has money problems, a homeless man has money problems, it's just we'd all rather have Warren Buffett's money problems and the homeless man's. So it's, it's not a question of getting rid of problems, it's simply a question of finding the problems that you are happy to have. And that actually, in a sick way you kind of enjoy having. And in that sense, it's choosing which problems you want to have in your life. Now, the choosing component comes later in the book. And that's a very important piece, because psychologically speaking, it's, there's a weird thing that happens, when, you know, if we suffer some sort of hardship, if, if our perception is that it's imposed on us unjustly by somebody else, then it causes us to suffer great. But if if our perception is that we somehow chose it, then we actually not only do we are we able to abide by it, but we're act we actually become very proud of it or like find meaning in it. The kind of a facetious example I use in the book is, I say, like, imagine if a mafioso like, kidnapped your family, and threatened to kill them if you unless you ran a marathon. Now, obviously, that marathon would be like absolutely grueling and horrifying and anxiety ridden, and all these things, it'd be like one of the most traumatic, awful things of your life. Now, imagine kind of an alternate universe where you plan for months, you hire a coach, you buy running shoes, you start training three times a week, and you work your way up over the course of months and months and months to running a marathon. And when you run it, all your friends and family are there, people are cheering you on, you cross the finish line and get a medal and you go to a party afterwards. Now that the actual pain and struggle of running the 26 miles is exactly the same in both scenarios, what's changed is the context. And what's changed is, is the perception that you chose the struggle the 26 miles. And it's it's that that sense that you chose it or not, that makes you either feel empowered or makes you feel like a victim. Now, kind of the, I guess



the big epiphany is or the big reveal is that like whether you realize it or not, you are always choosing. So it's like an every moment. No matter what happens to you, we're always choosing how to react to each situation, you're always choosing how you're going to see each situation, you know, and it's maybe you get hit by a bus. It's not your fault, you got hit by a bus, but you still have to choose how to respond to it, you have, you still have to choose to get better to recover. And so once you become aware of this choosing, it kind of eliminates any sense of victimhood. It eliminates any sense of like disempowerment. I mean, I shouldn't say all victimhood. But like a lot of it, right, like, it's, there's still is like, just flat out injustice in the world, but a lot of the petty stuff that we feel like so victimized by often it's just a simple like kind of reframing of our sense of like what we're choosing, you know, so it's like, okay, maybe I didn't choose to get hit by the bus, but like, I chose to walk today. And I chose to listen to music really loud and not look both ways before I cross the street like that, that's part of that was part of my choice. So it's, it's, it's recognizing all these kind of micro decisions that are constantly going on behind the scenes that that are like very secretly empowering in a lot of ways. Now, the point that you raised about distraction, like, that's something I've brought up a lot, in my my second book, and then also, on my website, you know, it's that sense of meaning and empowerment, it's always available to us. But the problem is, is, the more options you have in the world, the more difficult the choices become. So, and this is kind of, there's like a little I call this the paradox of progress. In my book, everything is fucked is like, it's, if you go back 200 years to like an agrarian economy. Life was extremely hard, like it was people, there was always wars and disease and famines, and like, natural disasters, and all this stuff, like people were dying all the time, infant mortality was super high. But it was always, like, the question of meaning was very simple. It was just don't die, right? Like it's, it's grown enough food to survive, and, and don't get killed, you know, by the disease or the war or whatever, you know, so there's never any kind of existential anks of like, oh, like, Who am I? Who do I want to be in the world? Like, there was no time for that there's like, literally just not an opportunity to even ask those questions. Because there were no options. You jump ahead. 200 years jump into like the 21st century. We're a society that's now overflowing with



optionality. Like we have. Like if you were highly educated young person, like there's almost limitless potential to the, the the people you could become, or the identities you could adopt for yourself. You could go into like, eight different industries, you could live in 20 different places, you could date 100 different people. You know, it's and not only do you have all these options now but like you will you continue to have these options all the time, no matter what you do. And so now it's like that question of what am I choosing like, it actually becomes not only like a very difficult question, because you have like more things to choose from, but you're also being distracted or seduced by you know, different messages or information or, or identities all the time like there's all these messages that you're getting bombarded with through social media and the Internet of like, who you should be and who you should identify with and you should be outraged because these these types of people are saying bad things about these types of people and like it's it's a constant you know, it's it's a constant like circus of attention hijacking. And when your attention is constantly being hijacked, you lose track of the fact that you have to choose you have to choose what struggles were worth sacrificing for, what's worth, what problems are worth having. And, and if you can't make that choice, then then you start to feel victimized. And and this kind of explains, you know, I said, I think I forget which book I said it in, but I said it was like we live in an interesting time where literally everybody feels like they're a victim right now like it's like rich people feel victimized, poor people feel victimized, like, every ethnicity feels victimized, like it's, it's across every kind of demographic. There's some sense of victimization going on. And I think, I don't think it actually has to do with any sort of intergroup. I mean, there is some intergroup prejudice and bigotry, but I don't think that's the main cause. I think the main cause is just simply it's we're all caught in the sea of optionality. We don't know what to care about. Our attention is constantly being hijacked. And because we're apes, the thing that hijacks us the easiest and the most often is some sort of like in group out group. victim blaming or accusation like, victim relationship or whatever. And so, you know, I just think that's kind of like the state of the world right now. And I think it's, it's taking us five or 10 years to kind of like, as a society to catch up with it and like, understand



what's going on, and stop playing the game. But I'm, like, cautiously hopeful that we're going to get there.

Jake 45:29

That's interesting, because I was gonna say, you know, five to 10 years, is, in itself a pretty optimistic take, I think, sort of the way I think about it is like, we, to your point earlier on, like agrarian civilization, you know, we have these sort of, and even before that, like hunter gatherer, and you go back through, like, the history of humanity, we have this biology that was built, like, you know, we were built to survive times with, you know, scarcity of food, and things like that, and shelter, and like, you know, child morbidity, and all these problems of just survival, and now, you know, not get, like eaten by some creditor or something. And now we have, like, none of those problems whatsoever. And so are sort of like outdated hardware, or whatever, or software is, like, makes us sort of create these problems, whether there necessarily aren't any. And I don't know, I hope that you're right, that a mystic view is going to be correct. But I think that some things have to change, based on like, where we are today.

Mark Manson 46:42

Totally. And it's funny, because a lot of people bring up what you just brought up, which is like, yeah, our, our bio, our biological machinery is like, so out of date for the reality that we live in. But I don't think it's, there's not, we're not going to, like, biologically innovate our way out of this, it's, we're going to culturally innovate our way out of this like it. And you're already starting to see this a little bit. You know, like, it's been, it's been interesting, the last few years to watch. People become very aware of like, what clickbait is. And, like a lot of this, these kind of words that, you know, me and my marketing buddies used to use 10 years ago is like, now part of the common lexicon because people were becoming aware of how different strategies hijack attention and stuff like that. And I think it's, it's, we just have to develop some cultural norms around, like, what's kind of acceptable discourse and what's not, I think, a lot of things too, is, you know, when, when I remember when I was, you know, maybe 1015 years ago, when Facebook was first blowing up, like, the thing to do was, you literally added,



like, every single person you ever met as a friend, and like, you'd go to a party on a Friday night, and you'd meet six people, and you'd immediately go home and add them all on Facebook. And then what happened about like, six, seven years ago, is you people started real, like enough time past that you realize you're like, wow, I don't give a shit about like, 80% of these people on Facebook. And so, so now there's kind of this cultural norm that's catching on of like, unfriending people, and people are starting to, like, consolidate who their connections are. And, you know, one of the, it's one of my biggest pieces of advice around this area is I tell people constantly I'm like, you know, unfought, like, do an ad 20, on your follows, you know, it's like, pull up your your Twitter list and unfollowed 80% of, you know, 80% of them. Because you're getting the vast majority of the value is coming from 20% of the people you follow, and the vast majority of the bullshit you see is coming from everybody else. So I think there's just a cultural norm that's happening around that. And it's, I just think a lot, a lot of this stuff is going to resolve itself, kind of naturally, just to the culture. And then, you know, maybe some other things require, like some institutional changes or something, but, you know, we'll see.

Jake 49:16

Yeah, no, I think that's a good point, certainly makes a No, I think that's a reasonable argument for arguing that, that we can come out of this and just sort of like, you know, outsmart the biology in a certain way, or just normalize the, whatever sort of new status quo needs to be sort of instituted in order to get over some of these biological like weaknesses that we have and like sort of snuck up on us without realizing or whatever. One of the one of the things I heard or read at some point in you talking about the book was, I think you said your favorite chapter was actually the one which was sort of centralized on death and how that plays sort of a role in in your perspective on things. And I bring it up because I think it's like one of my favorite quotes from one of my favorite people is, you know, the old Steve Jobs quote that basically, forever was exactly I shouldn't say is my favorite quote, and I forget what it is. But the concept sort of sticks minds, which is basically remembering death often helps a lot when making choices in life. So I think about it a lot. Why was that your favorite chapter did have anything to do with that? Or do



you know, do you think about death quite a bit? Does it make sort of an impact on how you approach things, we'd love to hear your perspective on that. I,

Mark Manson 50:41

I do think about death quite a bit. And I've, I've benefited a lot from thinking about it, you know, so that chapter opens up with a story about a good friend of mine, who died at a party when I was 19 years old, and kind of the impact that that had on me at the time. But you know, looking back, I experienced a lot of death around me at an early age, like, all my grandparents died when I was pretty young, except for one I had a classmate of mine in high school had cancer, another classmate died in a car accident. Friend of mine died at 19, I had another classmate who died, you know, a couple years after that. So it was like this thing that was always kind of like front and center. It just kept happening at like, my formative years. And so I think I just grew up thinking about it a lot, thinking about mortality a lot and thinking about, you know, questions like if I, if I died tomorrow, or if I died next year, like how would I feel about my life, would I still make these decisions like this, but I still hang out with these people. And so on the one hand, that the chapter is just kind of summarizing a lot of the benefits that I've gotten from that. The other thing on a more philosophical level, I think, you know, when you talk about values, and ultimately, you know, subtle art, and my other work is, is mostly work about values, like helping people find what they value and prioritizing what they value. You know, values kind of live in this, like, this sea of relativity, you know, like, like, you can't really prove that something is more valuable than something else. It's all very subjective. And it's, there's not really any, like, objective measurement for any of this stuff. But one thing that does seem to be very permanent is, is the scarcity, that is life, you know, is like the amount of time that each of us has, and that I like that explanation of value. You know, I think I even write in that chapter that it's like, the knowledge of our own death is, is what allows us is what illuminates the things that matter in our lives, you know, in anybody who's either been close to a death or close to tragedy, or actually had a scare themselves, as probably felt this is that, you know, when you get close to death, it suddenly makes the few things that matter in your life very, very obvious to you. And



it makes all this stupid shit that you don't care about. But you've been wasting your time on it also makes that very obvious to you. And so it's also just any time you talk at length about depth, it's a very emotional thing. So it's, I wanted it to be a moving chapter. From the way it was written, and I'm very proud of the way it came out. Like I think I I think it's probably the best thing I've ever written. So yeah, I mean, all those things put together, it's kind of makes it my favorite chapter, I'll tell you a cool story, actually. You know, so when I was pitching the book, the publishers, I, I came to New York, I was living in Brazil at the time, and I came to New York and my agent had had arranged meetings with like, eight or nine different editors, and we were gonna have an auction and all this stuff. And so I started doing all these meetings with with editors at all the big five publishers and, and it was, you know, some of the editors, they seem pretty cool. They kind of got it. A lot of the editors just didn't like you could tell like they didn't get the blog blogger thing. They didn't get the internet thing, like the humor and the memes and shit like that. And then I went to Harper Collins and I had a meeting with my hoop, the guy who became my editor, Luke, Luke Dempsey, and walked into the meeting. And the very first thing I sat down the very first thing he said to me is, he said, I'm a cancer survivor. It's the best thing that ever happened to me, and I don't care how much it costs, I'm gonna publish your book. And I was like, fucking done. Alright, like, can't cancel the rest of the meeting. This guy gets it like this is it, you know? And so it's, and it's true. I mean, he, he literally had a blank, he said, He's like, whatever the other publishers bid, I'll bid, I'll do it above it, you know. And so we ended up working with him. And it's, it's been great. He's been a friend ever since.

Jake 55:33

That's awesome. I appreciate you sharing that story. Because that's not some of the sort of things I think you certainly can't get it reading the book itself. And it's just a really cool background piece as to how everything came to fruition, I'm sure he's pretty happy. You know, it's a bold move to say you have a blank check. But I'm sure he's pretty happy with the way things turned out. So last couple questions here. And then we'll wrap up, I appreciate you going over on time. After having the success that came from this book, like, you know, we talked about it, like you'd sort of earned yourself financial



freedom before it's not like you were struggling or anything, but this is sort of next level, you know, 12 million people, it's like hard to wrap your head around how many people that is that have read your book, you know, committed sort of like hours of their life to understanding your perspective on something, which is like, this isn't just like some book on some random thing, either. It's like, pretty much a general life philosophy type of thing. If you had to sort of, like boil it down, or maybe just pick one thing that stands out about the way that your life was like before, the success of the book, and then since what sort of like jumps out is just being very different, for better or worse from just having such, you know, enormous and, and I imagine, like somewhat sudden success.

Mark Manson 56:57

Hmm. It's funny, because I've, I've gotten asked variations of this question. So the variation of this question I get asked usually is, is, you know, how did the success you know, what was the biggest benefit of the success? The biggest change from the successors? So some people even say, like, what was your big splurge? Like, what do you spend all your money on? or whatever? You So Much better version of the question, which is, what's what's the difference? And I would actually say the biggest difference is actually not, it's not a positive, but it's not a negative, either. It's just different. I would say the biggest difference is, before the book, I, I had nothing to lose, I was always the guy who was like, fuck it, like, let's, let's put the fuck article up, like, you know, or, you know, fuck it, let's, let's like, make this really offensive meme. And put it on Facebook, and just see what happens. You know, like, I was never the guy who had anything to lose. And since the book, now, I'm the guy who has something, you know, I've got contracts, I've got, you know, deals with celebrities, I'm talking to producers in Hollywood. And it's like, I tried very hard to not let that stuff interfere with, you know, my convictions or my values, but, you know, on the tactical stuff, it sucks sometimes. And, and then it also in terms of like, the anxiety that comes with like, expectations, you know, it's like having to write a follow up the subtle art was just, it was emotionally fucking brutal, because you're just, you're literally spending two years of your life working on this thing that you know, is not going to be as successful as the last thing you did. And it just, it's very



demoralizing in a weird way. So it's introduced a lot of weird new kinds of stress. But like those, that stress is there for a very, very good reason. And a reason that I would never take back. So it's a very weird kind of like bittersweet type thing. You know, the money like I've always, I've always lived very simply, and, and my, my blog was very popular before the book, so it's like the the money didn't really change anything. Nobody recognizes authors. So like, I never get stopped in the street or anything like that. Yeah, really, the only thing that changed is just like the, the having nothing to lose, and I would actually I kind of I find myself, you know, like, I found myself the last year I think this is why I've kind of gotten into the crypto NFT stuff is like, I'm looking for an arena where I can have nothing to lose again. Like I miss that feeling. I miss like the being like the scrappy upstart who's like, Well, fuck it. We might go broke, but let's go Let's do it. I missed that feeling. So that's kind of that's kind of where I'm at right now.

Jake 1:00:07

Yeah, that's an awesome answer. And I appreciate the candor, as well as the compliment on the question. I won't take any credit for prompting the answer. But I was really, you know, I really appreciate that, especially as someone who really values you know, I'm still young and just like, started the podcast a year ago, really, still feel very fortunate to feel like I have nothing to lose. But I think it's just inevitable that with success that falls away, and you have to sort of remind yourself actually, the second part of the jobs quote that I mentioned earlier, he talks about how I think death, remembering death, helps him make choices. He also says, like, remembering death is easiest way to avoid the trap of thinking I have something to lose. It's like you're always naked. You know, just, I don't know. Again, I wish I remembered it word for word. But uh, the the premise of the quote has stuck with me, sir. And then I should definitely go back and, and read it after this. So anyway, you can go look it

Mark Manson 1:01:11

up and edit it in? And yeah, exactly. Like you memorized it perfectly the whole time.



Jake 1:01:17

Either just like pop it in here, or people hear us talking about me popping it in here and either writes, that's fine. But we'll wrap it up with on a lighter note, if you got a new book coming out with Will Smith, you know, everyone knows Will Smith, the actor and and so I guess I want to ask, you know, what have you? It's like an autobiography. Right? So like, what have you learned either from him personally, or his story? What's something that has been, you know, you can't tell from watching him in the movies, but was really cool that you sort of learned from Mark when working together with him.

Mark Manson 1:01:55

You know, it's funny. I learned a lot of things for him. But most of the things I learned are not in the book. But that's you should still get the book. I mean, it's funny, because so what's in the book is like he his personal story, which he's never really shared before publicly. It's it's a really incredible life story in it, of overcoming a lot of adversity. I was the first time I met him, and he started telling me about his life, particularly his childhood, I was shocked. You know, it was like, holy shit, dude, like, you came real far. And see, you know, so that's mostly what the books about is kind of that, that overcoming of hardship, and trauma, and persevering and all that stuff. Which is, which is great. And it's super powerful. It's just that I live in that space I deal with, I deal with those stories. 24 seven. So to me, it's, it's, you know, that's part of my job. So I've seen a lot of those is just more notable. But what I personally learned from him, I was actually I learned a lot from him professionally. his professionalism with the public with the media. The way he treats his fans, it was so funny. I remember the first time I saw him walk through a hotel lobby, and he got like, mobbed by people. I was like, man, he's nicer to his fans than I, like, I don't even have that many. I was like, I should be nicer to my fans, man. He's just the way he conducts himself. A lot of the things, you know, the way he he puts his team together, he puts a lot of emphasis on trust and loyalty. You know, one of the things he told me, which was really cool, as he said, he was like, you know, when I started to become famous, nothing, nothing was scarce anymore. You know, it's like, money, tons of money, you know, attention, tons of attention, if I want girls, like, go get any girl, like, if I want a fancy car and



buy every fancy car, you know, it's like, all the scarcity is gone. He said, except for one thing, which is trust, trust becomes way more scarce, when you become famous. And so he really prioritize, like, keeping the people close to him close to him, like keeping those relationships really solid. And like all the people who work for him, like they've been with him for like 28 years, 29 years now, you know, it's super impressive. So, stuff like that, like really made an impression on me of just like kind of basic, how to conduct yourself as like a highly successful professional. He was a little bit of a role model for me, especially, you know, coming off like, the huge success of my book and not knowing what the fuck to do with myself. It was he was a really good influence.

Jake 1:04:49

That's awesome. I'm looking forward to Well, first of all, congrats on you know, getting into that much sounds like a very exclusive circle of trust with him and he sounds like an amazing guy and I'm looking forward to the book, I think it's to your point earlier on, like trying to follow up subtle art sort of being an impossible task. I like that this is pretty different and pretty awesome. So looking forward to reading that when it comes out. That thank you again, mark for just taking the time and going significantly over today, as well as it's great talking with you. Before we wrap up here, where can people go? And, you know, where are you on point people, whether it's like falling the release date for the book or getting you on Twitter, getting on big cloud where we connected? Where do you want to send people or the blog or whatnot.

Mark Manson 1:05:39

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