



The
Life-Changing
Magic *of*
Not Giving
*a F**k*

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Not Giving
a F*k*

How to stop spending time you don't have
doing things you don't want to do
with people you don't like

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Quercus

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A fucking disclaimer

This is a book about not giving a fuck. In order to practically quantify my methods, I've confessed to banishing many objects, concepts, events, activities, and people from my life. You may not agree with all of my choices. Fair. You may even think you recognize yourself in these pages — particularly if you are a parent of small children, a karaoke enthusiast, a friend, family member, or former colleague of mine. If so, you're either correct, or delusional. In any case, if you're offended by anything I've written, then you **really** need this book. Proceed immediately to page 25: "You Need to Stop Giving a Fuck About What Other People Think."

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Introduction



If you're like me, you've been giving too many fucks about too many things for too long. You're overextended and overburdened by life. Stressed out, anxious, maybe even panic-stricken about your commitments.

The Life-Changing Magic of Not Giving a Fuck is for all of us who work too much, play too little, and never have enough time to devote to the people and things that truly make us happy.

I was almost thirty years old when I began to realize it was possible to stop giving so many fucks, but I was nearly forty before I figured out how to make it happen on a grand scale. This book is a culmination of everything I've learned about not giving a fuck, a testament to the pleasure it has brought me, and a step-by-step guide for those wishing to free themselves from the shackles of fuck-giving in pursuit of healthier, happier lives.

If the title sounds familiar, congratulations! You haven't

been living under a rock as *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* by Japanese decluttering expert Marie Kondo has climbed bestseller lists all over the world. Millions of people have discovered her two-step KonMari Method, discarding items that do not “spark joy” and then organizing the ones they have left. The result is a clean, tranquil living space that, Ms Kondo claims, promotes transformation even outside the home.

So what does a Japanese book about tidying up have to do with my manifesto on not giving a fuck?

Why, I thought you’d never ask!

As prim, genteel, and effective at organizing your physical clutter as Ms Kondo is, I’ve got something else in store for you...

Tidying up your fuck drawer

In the summer of 2015 I quit my job at a major publishing house, a career that had been fifteen years in the making, to start my own business as a freelance editor and writer. The day I walked out of my high-rise office building—sliding down that corporate ladder faster than a stripper down the last pole of the night—I eliminated a whole category of fucks I had previously given to supervisors, co-workers, my commute, my wardrobe, my alarm clock, and more.

I stopped giving a fuck about Sales Conferences. I

stopped giving a fuck about “business-casual” and “town-hall meetings”. I stopped keeping track of my vacation days like a prisoner tallying her sentence in hash marks on the cell-block wall.

Once I was released from the yoke of corporate ennui, I naturally had a bit of time on my hands and the freedom to spend it as I wished. I slept until I was damn well ready to get up, ate lunch with my husband, worked on a freelance gig or two (or maybe went to the beach), and avoided the New York City subway as much as humanly possible.

I also read *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. As a generally tidy person, I didn't think I was in dire need of Ms Kondo's advice, but I'm always looking for ways to make my apartment look more like *Real Simple* magazine — and, hey, my time was my own to work, nap, or declutter as I saw fit.

Well, let me tell you, this little book works as advertised. It was almost... dare I say... *magic*?

Within hours, I had KonMari'd my husband's sock drawer, which involves getting rid of socks you don't like and never wear (or, in this case, socks I knew *he* didn't like and never wore), then refolding the rest to look like little soldiers standing at attention, so when you next open the drawer, you can see all of them in one glance. After viewing the results, my husband — who'd initially thought I was batshit crazy to spend my time organizing his sock drawer — was a convert. He did the rest of his drawers and his closet all by himself the very next day.

If you haven't read Marie Kondo's book, allow me to explain why we were so motivated to do this work.

Beyond discarding items of clothing we no longer need or enjoy (and therefore being excited about all of our remaining options), we've decreased the time spent figuring out what to wear (because we can see everything in a single drawer with one look), nothing gets "lost" in a drawer any more (because we follow Ms Kondo's method of stand-up folding), and we do a lot less laundry (because we haven't tricked ourselves into thinking we're "out" of clothes when in fact the good stuff was just crumpled up in the back of the bureau under the pants that don't fit).

In other words: Life is significantly better now that we can see all of our socks. And I ran around for weeks evangelizing to anybody who would listen (and many who would not).

Suddenly, with all the job-quitting and sock-tidying, I found myself in a life-changing kind of mood!

As I contemplated my exceptionally tidy home, I felt more peaceful, sure. I like a clear surface and a well-organized kitchen cabinet. But it was the freedom I felt from leaving a job I wasn't happy in — and being able to add people and things and events and hobbies that made me happy *back* into my life — that truly brought happiness. These were things that had been displaced not by twenty-two pairs of balled-up socks, but by **too many obligations and too much *mental* clutter.**

That's when I realized... it's not really about the socks, is it?

Don't get me wrong, I admire Marie Kondo for starting a revolution of decluttering physical spaces to bring more joy to one's life. It worked on me, and it's clearly working on millions of people around the world. But as she says in her book, "Life truly begins after you have put your house in order."

Well, I put my house in order. The real magic happened when I focused on my fucks.

Let's back up a little bit.

The art of mental decluttering

I was a born fuck-giver. Maybe you are too.

As a self-described overachieving perfectionist, I gave my fucks liberally all throughout my childhood and adolescence. I tackled numerous projects, tasks, and standardized tests in order to prove myself worthy of respect and admiration from my family, friends, and even casual acquaintances. I socialized with people I did not like in order to appear benevolent; I performed jobs that were beneath me in order to appear helpful; I ate things that disgusted me in order to appear gracious. In short, I gave way too many fucks for far, far too long.

This was no way to live.

The first time I met someone who just didn't give a fuck was in my early twenties. We'll call him Jeff. A successful business owner with a large circle of friends, Jeff simply

could not be bothered to do things he didn't want to do. And yet, he was widely liked and respected. He didn't show up to your toddler's dance recital or to watch you cross the finish line at your seventeenth 5K, but it was okay, because that was just him, you know? He was a perfectly nice, sociable, and well-thought-of guy, but he clearly reserved his fucks for things that were especially important to him — having a close relationship with his kids, playing golf, catching *Deal or No Deal* every night. The rest of it?

Could. Not. Give. A. Fuck.

And he always seemed so positively contented and, well, happy.

Huh, I often thought to myself after spending time with him. *I wish I could be more like Jeff.*

Later, in my mid twenties, I had a downstairs neighbour who was an absolute nightmare. But for some reason I cared enough about his opinion of me to submit to his insane requests (like the time he corralled a friend to stomp around my apartment in high-heeled boots while I *listened* with him from his living room below, hearing nothing, but gamely agreeing that it was “a little noisy”).

He was clearly unhinged — so why did it matter if he liked me or not? In retrospect, I should have stopped giving a fuck about Mr Rosenberg the first time he accused my room-mate of “heavy exercising” in the bedroom above his... when my room-mate had been travelling in Europe for two weeks.

Then, nearing thirty, I got engaged and started

planning a wedding — an act that demands a veritable cornucopia of fucks given: the budget, the venue, the catering, the dress, the photos, the flowers, the band, the guest list, the invitations (wording and thickness thereof), the vows, the cake, and everything else — the list goes on. Many of these things I truly cared about, but some of them I didn't; and yet, I gave each and every one of them a fuck because I didn't know any better. I became so stressed out that **I was about as far from contented and happy as it gets.** By the time the Big Day rolled around, I had migraines, a persistent stomach ache, and a case of hives the same rosy pink as the floral detail on my gown.

Looking back, was arguing with my husband over playing “Brown-Eyed Girl” at the reception really worth my time (or his)?

Had minute attention to detail re: the selection of passed hors d'oeuvres really been necessary when I didn't get to eat any of them because they were passed during our photos?

Nope.

But — and here's where the tide turned ever so slightly — I had won one small victory: I may have had to give a fuck about the guest list (because I *definitely* gave a fuck about the budget), but you know what I never gave a fuck about? Seating charts!

In deciding that all of my wedding guests were grown-ass adults who didn't need my help in choosing a seat for the privilege of being fed, soused, and entertained on my dime, I had eliminated hours — perhaps a dozen or more — of poring

over the event-space schematics and moving aunts, uncles, and plus-ones around like beads on a goddamn abacus. Win!

After the wedding fuckscapade, I was exhausted. I'd been pushed to my breaking point. Yet I'd also seen a silver lining in that abandoned seating chart. I knew that seating charts were *supposed* to matter to me, but they didn't. Instead of putting that feeling of obligation ahead of my own personal preference, I'd just decided not to give a fuck and let the butts land where they may. And did anyone complain to the blushing bride? No, they did not.

Hmm...

Little by little over the next several years, **I stopped giving a fuck about small things that annoyed me.** I RSVP'd "no" to a couple of after-work mixers. I unfriended some truly irritating people on Facebook. I refused to suffer through another "reading" of your "play".

And little by little, I started feeling better. Less burdened. More peaceful. I hung up on telemarketers; I said no to a weekend trip with toddlers; I stopped watching season 2 of *True Detective* after only one episode. I was becoming my true self, able to focus more on people and things that actually, as Marie Kondo might say, "sparked joy".

Soon, I realized I had my own insights to share with regard to life-changing magic.

Brings you happiness? Then by all means, keep giving a fuck.

But perhaps the more pertinent question is:

Does it annoy?

If so, you need to stop giving a fuck, post-haste. And I can show you how.

I've developed a programme for **decluttering and reorganizing your mental space by not giving a fuck**, wherein *not giving a fuck* means not spending time, energy, and/or money on things that neither make you happy nor improve your life (annoy), so that you have *more* time, energy, and/or money to devote to the things that do (bring happiness).

I call it the NotSorry Method. It has two steps:

1. Deciding what you don't give a fuck about
2. Not giving a fuck about those things

And of course, "Not Sorry" is how you should feel when you've accomplished this.

My method is quite simple — and this book offers you the tools and perspective to master it, and to radically improve your day-to-day existence. **In fact, once you begin implementing NotSorry, you'll never want or need to give an extraneous fuck ever again.**

The magic of not giving a fuck

In this book, you will learn:

- Why giving a fuck about what other people think is your worst enemy — and how to stop doing it

- How to sort your fucks into categories for ease in identifying annoy vs joy
- Simple criteria for whether or not you should give a fuck (e.g., “Does this affect anyone other than me?”)
- The keys to not giving a fuck *without* being an asshole
- The importance of making (and sticking to) a Fuck Budget
- How mastering the art of giving fewer, better fucks can transform your life
- And much, much more!

Just think about how much better your life would be if you could say no to things you really don't give a fuck about and have more time, energy, and money to say yes to the things you do.

For example, when I stopped giving a fuck about putting on make-up before leaving my apartment just to go to the grocery store, I gained ten leisurely minutes to sit on my couch and read the *Us Weekly* I'd just bought at said grocery store.

Or, when I stopped giving a fuck about going to baby showers — an activity I positively *loathe* — I gained untold Sunday afternoons of freedom!

And all that time I save by not going to baby showers?

Well, first, I pour myself a double shot of Patrón, and then it's only a few clicks on Giggle.com to order a shiny new breast pump for the mother-to-be, after which I raise a glass to my old housemate's once-amazing boobs.

Fare thee well, ladies!

Ten minutes online versus four hours of diaper-decorating games and virgin punch? For me, it's a no-brainer. For you, baby showers could be a fuck-worthy activity, while it's, I don't know, prowling yard sales every weekend with your deal-seeking significant other that brings you no end of annoy.

The specifics don't matter. What matters is, if you follow my NotSorry Method for not giving a fuck, your spirit will be lighter, your calendar will be clearer, and your time and energy will be spent on only the things and people you enjoy.

It's life-changing. Swear to God.