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## DIRTY THOUGHTS

When the TV show “Dirty Jobs” first hit the airwaves in 2005, I was mildly amused by the idea of this actor guy who subjected himself to performing nasty tasks like hog castration, snake sexing and bird vomit inspection. We yukked it up along with Mike Rowe and his crew as they got very, very dirty and we learned about the weirder side of America’s lesser-known workplaces.

But, along the way, the stinky and gooey parts of more than 300 different filthy jobs began to take a backseat to another aspect of the show: getting to know typical Americans who work hard behind the scenes and do important things that benefit others.

Sound familiar?

Over the years I became a regular viewer of “Dirty Jobs,” but I also became a fan of Mike Rowe himself. Here’s a guy who faked his way into an opera singing job 20+ years ago and since then has become an iconic TV host, voiceover king, corporate spokesman for Ford, CAT and others, big fan of the Green Industry and, more recently, an advocate for the idea that not everyone needs a college degree and that labor – hard work using one’s own hands – is a rewarding and valuable thing.

In short, I think Mike Rowe is far more in touch with the pulse of America than any member of Congress or big city mayor. I also like the fact that he’s apolitical. It’s not about politics... it’s about common sense. You can learn a lot of great stuff about his foundation and what he’s trying to accomplish here: [www.profoundlydisconnected.com](http://www.profoundlydisconnected.com).

I decided I had to talk about Rowe this month after a simple Facebook post he wrote last month pretty much

blew my mind because it perfectly captured the whole Millennial angst problem but it also speaks volumes about America today. A young person wrote him for career advice and he responded... well, read it for yourself. Here’s a shortened version. You can find the whole thing on his site:

*Hey Mike!*

*I’ve spent this last year trying to figure out the right career for myself and I still can’t figure out what to do. I have always been a hands-on kind of guy and a go-getter. I could never be an office worker. I need change, excitement, and adventure in my life, but where the pay is steady. I grew up in construction and my first job was a restoration project. I love everything outdoors. I play music for extra money. I like trying pretty much everything, but get bored very easily. I want a career that will always keep me happy, but can allow me to have a family and get some time to travel. I figure if anyone knows jobs it’s you so I was wondering your thoughts on this if you ever get the time! Thank you!*

Rowe responds:

*“Consider your own words. You don’t want a career - you want the “right” career. You need “excitement” and “adventure,” but not at the expense of stability. You want lots of “change” and the “freedom to travel,” but you need the certainty of “steady pay.” You talk about being “easily bored” as though boredom is out of your control. It isn’t. Boredom is a choice. Like tardiness. Or interrupting. It’s one thing to “love the outdoors,” but you take it a step further. You vow to “never” take an office job. You talk about the needs of your family, even though that family doesn’t exist. And finally,*

*you say the career you describe must “always” make you “happy.”*

*“Stop looking for the “right” career, and start looking for a job. Any job. Forget about what you like. Focus on what’s available. Get yourself hired. Show up early. Stay late. Volunteer for the scut work. Become indispensable. You can always quit later, and be no worse off than you are today. But don’t waste another year looking for a career that doesn’t exist. And most of all, stop worrying about your happiness. Happiness does not come from a job. It comes from knowing what you truly value, and behaving in a way that’s consistent with those beliefs.*

*“Many people today resent the suggestion that they’re in charge of the way they feel. But trust me, Parker. Those people are mistaken. That was a big lesson from Dirty Jobs, and I learned it several hundred times before it stuck. What you do, who you’re with, and how you feel about the world around you, is completely up to you.”*

This is remarkable advice on a bunch of levels. First, it’s a nice slap upside the head to a generation of young workers who aren’t particularly interested in working. Second, it reminds us that the simplest things matter most: I’ll take someone who’s hard-working and reliable over someone who crushed their ACT or interned someplace fancy anytime. Finally, he really nails it by stating flatly that happiness doesn’t flow from your title... it comes from walking the talk.

This country needs way less Kim Kardashian and way more Mike Rowe. Let’s never forget there is honor and great reward in simple hard work. And let’s teach our kids that lesson, too. **GCI**