

*How Not to Care 101 by Don Taist Forno*

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**Abstract**

How Not to Care 101 by Don Taist Forno

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*How Not to Care 101 by Don Taist Forno* explores the questions of why society continues to provide for the people who are on top of the capitalistic system and always have been. It inspires lower-positioned workers to revolt and shy away from the common people-pleasing tactics we all learn at birth.

Deja Culver

Graduate Thesis – *How Not to Care 101 by Don Taist Forno*

Jeffrey Frace

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The most recent offering of my solo show, *How Not to Care 101 by Don Taist Forno*, is a buffoon-like seminar taught by a psychology professor where he instructs people not to care about each other. During my time at the University of Washington, I have become interested in the idea and philosophy of compassion. I have also become curious about the world around us, and how we continue in this current structure, particularly pertaining to the individualism, lack of empathy, and effects of the capitalistic structure that we see today: A system that protects, champions, and profits for higher-level workers. The initial workings of my idea came out of not feeling held by this structure. In early rehearsals, I proposed the question to myself and my small audiences: why don't we care for each other?

I would like to go into my full process and how I got to my show. Initially before break I had a lot of ideas that I thought were all fun. Professor Brad Wrenn gave some advice on writing down ten childlike dreams of things that you want to do on stage. This was a helpful place to start, however I did struggle with being indecisive. I got down to three ideas and ran some experiments in rehearsal, trying out and brainstorming the ideas I had. I felt even more overwhelmed because the experiments did not help me decide. So, over my next sessions in the studio by myself, I did a big messy clown warm up, where you open your heart and let out some emotions (rage, sorrow, and laughter). This warmup helps me become more present and open with myself. After doing the warmup, I settled with my loneliness, and I wrote from there. I showed Kate Drummond some of my exploration. It is so great to show people things because you get clearer about what you want to say and become more specific about it. Even though it helped me get more specific, I was still struggling to find fun in the exploration. A week later, I set up a session with Nic Morden. I went back to the drawing board of my dream stage list. I decided to chuck my question to the side, and I was able to decipher a fun idea of playing a dominatrix. So, I told him about it, and he and I came to a concept that was like his own for his solo show, a dominatrix who wants to be and even looks powerful but is shy. This was certainly more fun than the last idea, but without a sense of fun. Nic Morden and I set up another session, and I was down about not feeling a hook or something to anchor to for the show. This is not a requirement for most, but for me I feel lost without a fun that will sustain. So, the next session that I had with Nic Morden. I did a clown warm-up before I started, and in the presence of my feelings it brought me back to the original question. So, we explored and thought of the idea of a seminar to teach people how to care for people. The next day I showed this seminar to Olga Kravtsova, and we had the idea of flipping the seminar and doing the opposite, which became a

seminar called How Not to Care. I was immediately inspired. That was three weeks before the solo show performance. After that I showed many other people and tried to become more specific with the idea.

### **Play**

In the play class, we focused a lot on finding joy and fun in the performance. In many of the exercises, a habit emerged quickly with students trying to make something happen in a game and therefore faking fun instead of playing. We soon realized that being able to listen to your own impulses was the most exciting thing for an audience to see. Knowing that joy is a necessary part of my process, I find myself faking the fun. Connecting to those experiences in play where I experience those true moments where there was not much faking it was a nice reminder throughout the process. I wanted to connect this idea of play to buffoon because I learned about the style from play. Buffoon is described as a performance style in French theater that focuses on the art of mockery. I had not learned buffoon and therefore was not intending to use the style. I included the style when preparing for my second showing to help connect the character's persona to the philosophy that he preaches.

### **Psychological Gesture**

I worked with psychological gestures with Professor Catherine Madden. I was struggling to find the character physically and it was helpful to think about the want of the character and find a gesture to represent that. It helped me to establish the characteristics I was looking for initially. The characteristics that I was looking for the first time were innocence and professionalism. The second time I went for a meaner approach to have the character practice what he is preaching.

### **Alexander**

I had a full circle moment in my last class of Alexander as I was preparing for my second showing of my solo show. A frequent question that would show up in Alexander classes was motivating “why you do this” and letting that propel you into the choices you make. Multiple times we have practiced this along with Michael Chekhov’s closet rituals to keep the things that we do not want in the rehearsal space outside of it. I was really struggling at the time and did not even want to perform a version in front of my peers who I know love and support me. In turn, I acknowledged my current pain and then connected performing to wanting to finish and get my MFA. With this, I was prompted to put my stuff in a ‘closet’ before I walked into perform. I folded those feelings like wet clay, put them to the side and walked in. I was able to perform and got many ideas and answers from the room.

### **Audience Participation**

Audience participation is hard and scary. For me, the scariest part is the improv portion. I would like to continue to practice this skill with ease. In my last two big assignments of the

quarter (Solo Show and Vanity Fair), I have gotten the chance to exercise that muscle. I got a lot of helpful tips about handling the audience when I would show snippets of my show. One of the main things I learned was just really holding space for the audience to answer the questions I prompted. Professor Adrienne Mackey worked with me on putting some of the philosophy of Don Taist Forno into the audience participation by showing the audience that I do not care in interactions with them.

### **Struggles**

One of my main struggles in the solo show process was synthesizing all the notes I got. I showed a lot of people snippets of my show. I was open to every note I got and therefore would change big chunks of my show each time I showed a person. I think one of the main things that contributed to this issue is my indecisiveness and taking each person's advice as gold. Do not get me wrong, each piece of advice was gold, but it was hard for me to decipher between two or six golden opinions. The issue proposed an interesting question that I never answered in the process: How do I healthily take in multiple amounts of gold suggestions without being overpowered by them?

A question that surfaced early in my graduate school journey was about joy in process. In my first and second year, I practiced finding images to latch onto in rehearsal processes: I did this by using my imagination and exploring the likes of my character. During my solo show work, I found that the fun would drain out while trying to make it more specific and when the process would get scarier. It gets scarier when there is a higher risk of failure which makes me want to back out. It has been nice to experience the inverse of this feeling in Vanity Fair. Transitioning to performance with bigger audiences was similarly scary but the role I have calls the actor to let go and just go, and that has been quite freeing. I see now with having both experiences together that I can take a more freeing approach as I continue solo work in the future.

In my second showing, it allowed me to get more specific. I found new jokes and tried connecting the character's philosophy to audience participation and therefore being mean. I think being mean is fun, but I struggle with it being a woman that learned people pleasing and being 'sweet' at early age.

### **How to expand in the future**

To expand in the future, I would like to take a buffoon class. It would be helpful to practice in a learning context. I would pick some collaborators to be an outside eye so that I do not get overwhelmed with too many opinions. I would also be very curious to get this up in front of a non-UW audience to practice gaining trust with people who do not know me. I got some nice comments about the possibility of showing this in various places like the CoHo Theater. Professor Bridget Connors was telling me that this could be something that helps corporate companies to blow off steam in orientations. That sounds like a lot of fun and I would like to

become even more sharp and specific in a deeper dive of teaching people how to do this, while teaching lower-level employees about “beating” your boss and capitalism.

**Knowing what I know now, how would I teach someone how to make a solo show?**

I would tell whoever to pick out that list of ten things that are going to give you joy on stage. That is just a subtle way to start with joy. Hopefully, this brings you to an idea for a show. After you do that, it is helpful to take three minutes to write down what happens in this show. Then, I would try to chase specificity till the end. Start scheduling times to meet with people maybe at least twice a week. Once you schedule with people then you can start to chase that specificity even more. It would be helpful to show in front of five or more people to practice actual audience participation.

## How Not to Care 101 by Don Taist Forno

Lights Up.

Don Taist Forno enters.

My name is Don Taist Forno. I work in the psychology department at UW. I used to primarily be an undergraduate professor many moons ago, but now I spend most of my time doing clinical research to advance the world. My research stem from my time working as a psychologist pro bono. A lot of our patients used to be on the lower on the income pole, therefore a lot of their issues stemmed from lack of resources. It is common psychological practice to teach our patients how to cope and submit to this capitalist system that keeps them on the lower pole. Throughout my time. Working with patients like this. I became curious of Another approach. How do I get them to have the grit, the teeth, and the fight to climb up that ladder? The Thesis Committee let me come here because I have a lot of success in my research, and therefore it would be good actors to learn these tools so that they can advance in any room they walk into. The title of my research is called "how not to care 101." And I found a lot of success for my patients.

Now, it might be weird adapt to this philosophy. It goes against what our mom and dads have taught us. To respect people. Be nice. Be the bigger person. If you do not have something nice to say, don't say it at all. Say Please. And thank you. Give people honey and you will get some honey back blah blah blah blah. This gets in the way of our own thriving. In this is Society we spend so much time practicing being courteous to each other. And all that time and energy that you spend doing that, you could be spending it figuring out how to not only Survive but thrive.

Don asks, someone "How was morning? - I don't care." You see how fast and efficient I was.

What did you eat for breakfast? I don't care. You see.

If you think of the process of Natural selection, where the fittest survive. The same is present in this school, in this institution in the world. Look at all the top moguls of the world. Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, William Gates, Oprah... they are the most phenomenal and capable panthers you have ever seen. You think these people are thinking about the empathy of the whole world while they are building their empire? No, they are using the same system of being a predator vs. Prey to thrive. allows a panther and a tiger to thrive in the wilds of Africa.

My greatest success story. Comes from. A little nerd from New York. He was always lost in his computer. His parents came to me because he was depressed from being overlooked by the world. Even after he got into one of the top schools in the country.

He might as well have been a spot on the wall. No one cared. After I worked together, to achieve his goal over usurping the people that overlook him. In our brainstorm, we concocted A diabolical plan to steal the idea The idea of online social network and now look at him.

(Pulls out a picture of Mark Zuckerberg)

the 4th richest person in the world. He is. My proudest accomplishment. Nothing can get in his way. Did you see how the? The government tried to shame him for countless teens dying from being bullied on his

website, but he still makes more money than all of them. This is how you do it. I will have him here so that he inspires you all. schools in the country. Nothing can get in his way.

You can come out on top of this fight by doing what the winners/ panthers do. Lie. Connive. Scheme. Bamboozle. Do your absolute worst. By disregard each person that dares stand in your way. We must fight our way to the top. That person next to you. You think that person next to you would not take the chance.

If you want to continue to be a loser in that fight, be my guest. I and all the winners in this room would be glad to crush you. They will drag you down, we must leave them.

Any questions so far? I DON'T CARE.

Cause Now I have some tools:

- Lying: We want to start flipping the way that we naturally think about things. Chair: think about being inconsiderate. Oh, my feet hurt. Give me your chair. See who got the upper hand.
- What is the meanest thing you have ever done? This might become my \* pupil.
- The meanest thing that I ever done is getting revenge on my grandmother. She used to always whoop me with the switch. As a young person I came across psychological warfare, so every night I would have a small alarm and I would wake up. Steal the switch and poke her in her sleep. I did this for weeks on end. And it trained her to stop.
- Smile and Nod. While gathering info. Who loves you the most? Then gather that info and plot later.
- I also love some gaslighting. Tell someone one thing.

More direct ways.

- When someone tries to shake your hand slap it away. With your neighbor.
- When you sneeze, you know how we all say bless you. Say fuck you instead, let us try it all together.
- Go for the most powerful person in the room and go for the jugular. We have the capacity as human beings to sniff out the humanity of others. We have a mask on all the time. But I know you know a person who seems like the strongest person in the room, then you talk to them and even under that beautifully crafted mask you see that they are suffering. Milk the suffering like a cow Teets and drink them dry. In other words, call out their mushy parts and let them know that they are up for stabbing.

Cherish yourself. Why shouldn't you have a comfortable life? Why shouldn't you strive? Why do you have to keep suffering over someone else's ego! Put yourself first. Why shouldn't you thrive?

Chant with me.

I don't care

I don't care.

I don't care.

I don't care for you (repeat x 3 or 4) the fourth time balloons fall from the ceiling while Don dances.

Louder. Put your whole body into louder. More Feeling.

Don transforms into Deja.

Guys, what are we doing, Singing this song. We must do better.

Then Deja actively forgives all of them.

I wish you well, I wish you peace, I wish you happiness, I wish for you to not get in the way of your own happiness, I wish you health.

**BLACKOUT.**