

# CHRIS DEALS WITH IT

episode notes




## EP 58 - Virality Is Temporary

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 *AI Statement: All elements of this episode are products of the author, Chris Kreuter, made without any use of AI tools.*

*In addition to the podcast, I put out a monthly e-mail newsletter. Back in March, I experimented with a personal reflection about virality, algorithms, and social media. The response was overwhelmingly positive, so on today's episode I want to share it on the podcast.*

I recently battled a nasty stomach bug. It sapped me of strength and robbed me of productive time. In it's worst moments, it became an all-encompassing journey of shock and delirium.

Despite the awfulness, the experience did remind me of the other kind of virality. The kind that people actually chase. One they'd gladly catch over and over, as if it's some magic elixir.

**But virality is temporary.**

Every day, I witness people gambling with algorithms. Posing at weird angles, bumbling through five second dance routines, straining to catch the light just right off their Frappuccino. Chasing the bug in the hope of attaining status and influence. Many are addicted to this chase, to the point where they're scrolling phones while driving through school zones. *(I've witnessed this three times around my kid's elementary school so far in March alone. It's infuriating.)*

But at this point, the possibility of virality online is pretty much out of any person's control. And if you were to catch a strain of it, its potency and duration are far reduced from earlier days of the internet & social media. This is due to the incredible volume of content, the pace at which it's delivered, and the shortening attention spans swiping through it.

I'm sorry, but if by some viral blessing, millions of other humans suddenly become aware of my work, I wouldn't want it to be a silly hockey meme, an artfully-filtered photo of a bookshelf, or doing a Tik-Tok dance in parachute pants. I'd want it to be something of substance: A novel, podcast, a newsletter piece, a pithy quote at the very least.

I know that's not how it works, which is why I refuse to chase it.

### **Virality is temporary.**

And even the gradual amassing of followers is a fools errand too. The conversation rates for turning social media followers to readers and listeners is pretty awful.

Sure, maybe it hurts the speed at which I acquire readers, listeners, fans. I wouldn't doubt that it's likely holding me back from getting a literary agent and getting traditionally published. Yet I'm not willing to sell out to social media behemoths & their algorithms that I abhor just to boost sales & notoriety.

**Social media is damaging society:** It warps kids' sense of reality and their self-esteem. It's made us more divisive than ever. Like a stomach bug, it consumes so many otherwise productive hours of human lives.

What I work on, and how I work on it won't be altered forever by one off-week recovering from a viral impact. But what would shift all the whats, hows, and whys of my life and work? Books, conversations with friends, good movies & shows, experiences with family, journeys into nature . . . Basically, long form content rooted 'IRL'.

I mostly control the algorithm & feed of what I consume. And I apply careful filters that protect my time, attention, and capacity for rational thought. I make sure to leave plenty of room for new experiences, outside perspectives, and growth opportunities. But I also give myself the grace of solitude to consider them and their place in my life.

Over the last year or so, I've noticed more of a societal push-back against these platforms. This grand, failing experiment of social media & interaction. I'll admit this is more of a 'gut feeling' (sorry), but one I welcome. I will do what I can to foster this push-back.

Which is why you won't find me, or Kreuter Studios, active on Instagram. Or Tik Tok, Snapchat, or wherever the cool virus-chasing people spread their strains of content on these days. (Old man shakes fist at cloud).

My Facebook and LinkedIn profiles are things I don't actively post to. They may occasionally get checked occasionally for messages, with I use browser extensions to block their news feeds.

I'm trying hard to not sound preachy about this. To not scream and rage and shake people in the street: **GET OFF SOCIAL MEDIA!** But it's so hard.

Perhaps I can act like a pharmacist here: I'm there to help as best I can when people decide they've lost enough life force to the viruses.

If this affects you at all, please spread it to others. But no pressure, I'm not looking to go viral, after all 😊

### Episode 58 Quote:

*It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation.*

— Herman Melville