



Your Story
MATTERS
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Columnist

Grateful, blessed – and struggling

Struggle does not discriminate. Grief and loss are part of the human experience. Many of us will face heartbreak, regret, and despair. It is also possible that amid all of these realities, we can simultaneously feel grateful, blessed, and perhaps just lucky.

One of the most dynamic aspects of my job is that because of universal struggle, I have the privilege to sit with clients across the cultural, socioeconomic, psychosocial, and spiritual spectrum. Each story is unique, and avenues toward healing demand creativity and personalization.

While there are certainly exceptions, the small towns in which I work, Sisters and Silverton, are known as quaint, desirable, safe, and each attracts its fair share of affluence and privilege. Both communities are also largely populated by decent, hard-working, and well-meaning residents, sensitive to their footprint in the community and larger world.

“I feel bad being here,” some say in reference to stepping in my office. “I feel like I am just complaining,” others say. “I am probably wasting your time...I am so grateful for my life...but I feel like I am drowning.” I do my best to gently inform each client that it is

entirely possible to be both grateful and dismal at the same time.

My more affluent clients, worried their trials will be perceived as petty, sometimes sheepishly tell their story as if there is a level of shame to their concerns. In truth, emotional struggle is a great equalizer. While there may be pockets of advanced treatment options available to the wealthy and money may allow for more privileged treatments for cancer, chronic disease, weight management, and aesthetic pursuits, cash cannot provide a lavish cure for depression, worry, loss, loneliness, abandonment, and heartbreak. The pain can be just as relevant and intense regardless of socioeconomic status.

Certainly, money can provide a lifestyle that may be protective against certain emotional trials and can allow for opportunities that may buffer emotional burdens, but the human experience that inevitably includes suffering cannot be avoided. Furthermore, wealth and popularity can also reinforce the need to maintain an image and reputation that limits a person’s ability to be authentic or to live their truth. This can be burdensome and quite frankly, exhausting.

We have seen celebrities, athletes, and prominent leaders and community members who appear to “have it all” disclose their emotional battles or mental illness and have also felt the shock of when emotional struggle overcomes a person’s will to continue on living. We might scratch our heads in search of how or why someone so “successful” could have been suffering so deeply.

Those devout to certain faith-based beliefs may also struggle within the paradox of emotional pain and

simultaneous devotion to hope and redemption. It can feel at times that the promises and comforts of faith can fall short amid loss and despair. Seeking respite outside a congregation can even feel like a betrayal of sorts. In my humble opinion, one should be able to be blessed, devout, and seek outside help without fear of judgement.

In writing this, it is my continued hope that we would all learn to lead with compassion and kindness. We like to create labels and divisions that create a perception of how people should live and behave. When we try to have such rigidity and expectation, the world often proves us wrong. If you are experiencing struggle and pain, breathe easy, you are human. Support is priceless — we are made to lean on each other and not go through this thing called life alone.

Draft of Oregon carbon emissions bill emerges

SALEM (AP) — A draft bill to curb carbon emissions which contribute to global warming landed with a thud, at 98 pages in length.

The measure released Thursday would establish a Carbon Policy Office, modify greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals and market-based mechanisms for covered entities to demonstrate compliance.

Oregon House Republicans predicted the bill will rearrange virtually every family budget, and change the life of every Oregonian.

House and Senate Republican leaders asked the Democrat leadership to involve all Oregonians in large policy decisions.

Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat, said she supports the measure since climate change threatens Oregon’s communities, economy, and way of life. She said legislators, advocates, and businesses across Oregon worked hard on the draft, and looks forward to refinements to ensure the program achieves climate and economic goals.

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