



Your Story
MATTERS
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Columnist

Fear of not doing enough

I have always been drawn to human emotion. The process of how one “becomes” has forever been fascinating. I was the middle-schooler curling up on the couch after school with my cinnamon toast crunch to “Dr. Phil” and “Oprah,” foregoing MTV and Nickelodeon. I enjoyed playing “therapist” and psychoanalyzing my friends (not sure if they always appreciated this), and I was (with pride) most definitely a playground conflict manager in fifth grade.

The term “empathy” is becoming a bit too trendy, but whatever the case, my curiosity to the human experience of emotion in all its breadth is the foundation of my professional and, in many ways, my personal life. This has led to strength and foresight, but it is not without challenges.

I hear a lot of stories in my office: Stories of trauma and loss, stories of heartbreak and despair, but also stories of resilience, compassion and connection. Over the years, I have learned to hold on to the beauty in the struggle and to embrace gratitude amid the stories that are most challenging. You learn to transform the darkness into bits of light — to find the silver linings. You celebrate small successes and seek out opportunities for laughter and lightness. You learn also to compartmentalize and recognize that despite your

best efforts, a client’s transformation is ultimately their own journey.

My inner strategies are not, however, foolproof. On occasion, the gravity of emotion, the heaviness, and the fear can creep in... and I ruminate: *Am I doing enough?*

Working in small towns, it is inevitable that you will cross paths with your clients — like all the time. Despite professional boundaries, maintaining emotional distance is not always easy. You appreciate the impacts of a client’s suffering or progress as far more palpable and immediate. One person’s loss, suffering, or triumph can have community-wide implications. There is vulnerability and fragility implicit in each and every client’s session. I like to think I do my best each day. I strive to operate the values of integrity, diligence, and compassion. Much of the time my work evokes feelings of great

privilege and gratitude, but the rabbit-hole of fear can, every once in a while, be haunting.

My teenage clients help keep me current on the popular lingo. I learned just a few months ago about ‘F.O.M.O.’ (fear of missing out) and while I appreciate the relevance, I find myself much more wrapped up in ‘F.O.N.D.E’ (*fear of not doing enough*) and I know I am not alone.

Our world has become increasingly smaller. The emotional struggles, stressors, and fears shared by humanity worldwide are at our fingertips, shared in real time, and more immediate than ever before. There is little respite from the hardships, and there can also be guilt in wanting to detach from it. We are more aware of suffering than ever before, and, at least on a personal level, the needs seem more urgent than ever before.

As a privileged human lucky with my basic needs

met, human connection, general stability, financial resources, and opportunity, I can find myself vacillating between knowing I technically “can” do more while knowing I should also take my own advice for self-care, boundaries, and the knowledge that just because I “can” does not always mean I “should.” Amid the perceived urgency and need, the risks versus benefit of it all can become a bit blurry sometimes. Is the risk greater to rest and withhold energy for another or to extend myself further for another and risk exhaustion? Despite preaching the value of self-care to client after client, sometimes I wrestle with the guilt of self-care in itself being such a first-world luxury.

Much of our culture is driven by a scarcity mindset, whereby a perceived fear, the concept of “enough” is questioned. Am I successful enough? Am

I attractive enough? Am I smart enough? Am I making enough? *Am I doing enough?*

When taking a bird’s-eye view, our scarcity mindset begs the question: What does “enough” even mean? What finish line are we striving for? Is it a standard that can ever actually be met? We end up postponing joy, satisfaction, and contentment for an imaginary concept.

There is so much need out there. So much desperation. And yes, there is an urgency for help and innovation. It can be easy to fear. It can be easy to feel guilt. Yet, we must ask ourselves in this space, “How can I best show up for the world?” Martyrdom is only so sustainable. We need endurance and resilience, which cannot be achieved without allowing for rest, reflection, and the quiet trust, that perhaps in this moment, and future moments *I am “enough” regardless.*

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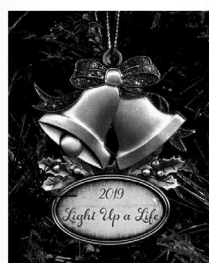
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