

Yesterday, I cried a lot.

On the art of not losing yourself in difficult times.



Yesterday was quite a day. Although it actually started out harmless enough. But then one piece of bad news followed another. One difficult story after another. Until, at some point, I simply couldn't take any more... Or was it just the lunar eclipse?

First, I found out that a dear colleague is very likely seriously ill again. News that hit me deeply. Then there was a neighbour who has become very dear to me. And not only to me. My dogs love her too. Her condition has now become so serious that she will probably have to move into a hospice. Another neighbour works at an animal hospital. She told me that they had to put more animals to sleep that day than ever before. And then my dogs and I went for our usual walk across the fields. There we found a little mouse. Badly injured. So badly that there was no way to save her. I had to end her suffering. Yes, it was "only" a mouse. But sometimes a little mouse

is not just a little mouse. It is, of course, a living being – and sometimes also the proverbial final straw. And at some point, it was simply all too much.

But as if all that had not been enough, yesterday I also walked away from a part of my business into which I had poured an enormous amount of time, work and heart. It was the right decision. But the right decisions can still hurt.

And on top of all that, there is the news from around the world that now accompanies us every single day. Natural disasters. Fires. Wars. Bankruptcies. The floods in Nepal. People losing their jobs. Companies disappearing. Livelihoods becoming unstable. One story follows the next. We swipe past it. Keep reading. Keep functioning. Make our coffee. Answer our emails. Go shopping. And

sometimes pretend that all of it simply passes us by. But it doesn't. At least it didn't for me yesterday. Yesterday evening, I sat there and simply cried.

Not even five good, disciplined minutes of crying so that I could get it over with afterwards. No. It kept coming back. All evening. I pulled myself together, and then the tears came again. I calmed down, and then it started all over again. Eventually, I stopped fighting it. So be it. I was sad. Right now, we have every reason to feel the weight of the world.

Perhaps we don't need to become even tougher right now. We are living through a time when an incredible number of things are hitting us all at once. And I think we underestimate what that does to us. It is no longer just our own little world that we have to carry. Through our phones, we now carry a piece of the entire world with us every single day. Other people's suffering. Fears about jobs. Wars. Disasters. Illness. Economic uncertainty. Politics. And somewhere in between, we are expected to think positively, remain productive, pay our bills, live healthily and preferably exercise three times a week as well.

We can do all that. But every now and then, we are also allowed to simply have a good cry. Because feelings do not disappear just because we ignore them. Sometimes they need a way out. Thank you, dear little mouse, and rest in peace.

This morning, everything wasn't suddenly fine again. My colleague is still ill. My neighbour is still very unwell. The mouse has not come back to life. My business decision still stands. And the world did not decide overnight to finally pull itself together and make peace. Shame, really.

But something else had changed. Me. Not instantly. I was still feeling fragile this morning. But as the day went on, my strength began to return. Hour by hour, a little more. And now I can even feel that something has grown stronger: my desire to

stand up for people who no longer know what to do with everything they are carrying. People who are frightened by all the changes. Who are losing their jobs or are afraid they might. Who are struggling financially. Who are losing someone. Who are worried about their future. Or who simply reach a point where they say: **I just can't do this anymore.**

These are precisely the people we must not allow to fall through the cracks now. Perhaps this is one of the most important switches of our time. Not looking away when things get difficult. But not making a permanent home in the difficulty either. Life is not made up only of the headlines that pop up on our phones every morning. It is also made up of a dog who is happy when you come home. A person who calls you. A coffee in the sunshine. A good conversation. A laugh in the middle of a shitty day. A hand reaching out to someone. And the remarkable human ability to get back up again after a difficult day. Perhaps even a little different than before.

I don't believe we should sugar-coat the times we are living through. There is too much going on for that. But I believe just as strongly that we should not allow these times to take away our joy in life. We are allowed to be sad. We are allowed to be afraid. We are allowed to be exhausted. And yes, we are allowed to cry for an entire evening. But eventually, we wipe the tears from our faces.

Take a breath. Get back up. Look ahead again. And carry on. Not because nothing happened. But because something did.

Yesterday, I cried a lot. Today, I know exactly what I get up for again: **for the people who must not be allowed to lose themselves in these times.**

The Switch Column by Monica Deters

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