

Dear Darling,

I am writing because I am struggling to understand how we can all take care of each other at a time rife with so much struggle, of the political, personal, and economic nature.

I want to believe that the thing that will get us through is care from our friends, neighbors, family, and that systems of collective care will save us. But, the energy and resources can feel really scarce. How can I have a mental or emotional breakdown when half of my friends are taking their turn? How can I take the time to rest and nourish myself when there is so much need in the community to be materially and emotionally cared for?

I know these are impossible questions, but I would be grateful for any ideas or tools you can think of.

– bobosa

Hello, my dear bobosa!

Oh, these are truly horrifying times that we are living in, and it seems like everybody is really going through it these days (myself included, if we're being honest). From deeply personal struggles like grief, loss, belonging, and safety, all the way up to the global horrors we are forced to bear witness to (genocide, unmitigated climate disasters, explicit fascism on the rise), it is absolutely too much. How can we manage to hold such weight? How do we not just immediately shut down, dissociate, or worse? Honestly, these questions have been swirling around in my mind for a while now, and, while I don't think that I have "the answer," I'll gladly tell you what's helping me to get through this waking nightmare.

I've been thinking a lot about that thing they tell you on airplanes, where they're like, "put your own oxygen mask on before helping others to put on their own masks." So many of us in radical community are driven by a desire to help, a desire to be useful, a desire to change the things we cannot

abide, and this is truly a gift. It is a blessing to share community with those committed to building a better world. However, I think that we frequently move directly into helping others without taking stock of our own needs or ensuring that we are resourced enough to undertake the challenges we see in front of us. As a result, we frequently burn out, communication stalls, projects falter, and sometimes we even get our feelings hurt in the process, adding to the monumental piles of stress we need to sort through. To respond to your question about taking the time to nourish yourself when there's so much to be done, I would urge you to think about how you can best show up for the work you're trying to do. If you aren't giving yourself the opportunity to recuperate, the space to just exist, how is that going to bleed into your ability to show up for others?

Another concept that I think may help us navigate the big overwhelming feelings of this moment is to think about scale. When we look at the atrocities occurring globally, it can easily feel like there's just nothing we can do. If this is happening to you, I would encourage you to reduce your scale. Start with the things that you know you can make a difference in. As the Trump administration unleashes attacks from all angles on our personal freedoms and our right to exist, it can feel like we need to do everything, to stop everything. Frequently, this train of thought leads to overwhelm and shutdown, which is what they want from us. If we stay focused on the things we know we can handle, bite off only what we can actually chew, we'll be able to show up more fully for ourselves, each other, and the movement for collective liberation. Hope these ramblings are helpful, my dear. Sending you warmth and comfort in these dark times.

Love and rage,
Darling Tonia