

*i feel quite good
it doesn't happen
that often*

almost everyone is unwell
people's mental health issues have structural
origins

therapy is important but it doesn't help with
your financial insecurity

sexual violence won't stop because your
friends are 'woke'

you can't self-care away not being invited

exclusionary spaces don't become inclusive
just because you write that in your event

inequality and toxic competition do not go
away by you making 'empathic' art

we're all victims and perpetrators, in our
different ways. we need to change our
communities.

we need to do better

I want to talk about opening up. About being vulnerable as a method of solidarity. Some kind of emotional solidarity, maybe you can call it that?

I believe that as soon as things are not spoken of, they in some ways become forbidden. I believe that everything we chose not to talk about in relationships leads to people feeling more lonely and wrong.

I want to talk about you asking me to lend you 300 sek last week the days before payday.

We talk a lot about helping each other when one is worse off and it feels natural to help a friend in need if you have the possibility, but even so I feel shame in asking for help myself. But I'm thinking that this matter of asking for money for food at the end of the month could be an act of solidarity in that it opens up for others to feel less shame to ask for it the next time.

Once I heard somebody talk about how it might be your responsibility to sometimes be extreme because the extreme always widens the boundaries for

what is seen as acceptable. That an extreme way of acting can make other peoples space of acting bigger. I think the person was talking about it in a larger political sense, but do you think that this could be applied in relationships and in smaller groups as well? Could being extremely helpless in front of one's friends be seen as an act of solidarity?

A depressed person asked on their instagram if anyone could make them lunch boxes and bring them over. I thought it was brave. They had felt like the worst person for asking for something like that, but also wrote that sometimes you have to be able to receive help without having to give anything back. At first it felt so forbidden but then totally right.

To push the boundaries, it's a huge thing to be the first one doing that. The first one asking for help widens up the space for others to do the same thing when they need to.

A few suggestions for how we can feel less isolated as artists:

- ☺ Give up the dream to be recognized as a great artist
- ☺ Ask for help
- ☺ Collaborate with people outside the art world
- ☺ Buy art directly from people who actually need the money
- ☺ Exhibit your work in the street/ in your home/ at the beach/ on the metro/ anywhere that isn't a commercial gallery or museum
- ☺ Invite everyone in your neighbourhood
- ☺ Trust that the quality of the art will only flourish and grow if we start working together

Lately he's been asking if I'm ever happy. Or not really asking, that's just me trying to rewrite reality. It's more of a statement. "You don't seem as if you're ever happy, with anything, anything you do".

I know he's right, I'm scared stiff of getting more and more bitter, of never being content, of living my life in this constant search of I don't know what, myself probably. I feel it gnawing at all of my relationships. Work that used to be fun and exciting feels like torture, I keep putting everything off. Sometimes when I'm out for a walk I think about how many fun things I could do, how much of my work could be fun. When I come back home I've always lost that feeling. Everything feels like shit again.

I've had that feeling in my stomach again the last few days, of escalating panic. I was supposed to reply to emails the day before yesterday, pay my bills last week. It keeps getting harder and harder every day, things fall apart, the center cannot hold, etc etc. I drove for the first time in the city a few days ago and almost crashed into another car. I'm so ashamed. The pale winter sun doesn't really reach in to our apartment, it barely makes it for a short while, it teases, then it's gone. It's dark.

I take my heap of bills and my laptop and go out into the biting cold, to the nearby café, to force myself to pay them there. I am not allowed to go home before having done that, and replied to my mail. I have a deadline today and I keep putting off starting with the work.

I'm starting to get wrinkles around my mouth.

I buy a coffee. The laptop's cold when I pull it out of my bag. An American man is seated in the table beside me. We talk a

bit. He's 58 and from the US, his style is colorful, he beams when I compliment his violet manchester jacket. His jeans are pale green. I want a pair like them. He encourages me to wear red or violet if I want to. I do want to. I don't know why I don't.

I find myself enjoying his talk that's almost new age-y, but not really. I'm too embedded in anxiety to be cynical, and I'm too starved for human interaction to care about the dynamic of man-explaining-to-young-woman. Or maybe it's that I can't diminish the meeting to just that. I'm almost crying when he talks about how wonderful it is to connect with other people, how unbelievable it is to be a mass of vibrating atoms and have a consciousness, how much he loves roots music, how pointless it is to not be oneself and be grateful for having it good. Grateful in the sense of appreciating things in general.

It sounds gross when I try to recount it. Sleazy hippie shit. Maybe I'm losing my mind. But meeting this person who was so pleased to talk, who was so excited. Maybe it's the fact that I also think about the weirdness, the fact that I am now and later I won't be and what do I want to do, do I want to talk to others, how can I fulfill my needs, what can I do to respect myself, to let myself be creative, what can I do to work against the despair and hopelessness I find myself sinking into regularly.

I never used to talk to anybody about anything when I was younger. It's been so hard learning to communicate with other humans. It hurts often but it's what makes me feel like I have a chance of becoming a better person; it's what makes me feel like I am becoming something better. Relating. Lifting other people up. Being one's best self for the sake of others. Like that guy told me: trying to stay awake but not doing it for oneself, for ego reasons, but for others.

my friend and ex-lover told me that things were going well, because now he had an apartment, a girlfriend and a full time job. he wished for fancy plates for christmas. i said that was the lamest thing he had ever told me. then he bought 2 paintings. shit dont matter.

I don't know which crisis to tell you. Bigger shock = better story, I suppose, but the less surprising ones feel worse to me. The shit that is supposed to be normal.

I sat in a class of 30 other immigrants, trying to get a grip on an unyielding language. Our teacher gave us a social tip: personal bubbles are big. Finns find it rude to ask if someone is ok, even if they clearly aren't. If someone wants help they will ask for it.

It's hard to ask for help when you're at your lowest. I sank.

When I surfaced, though, the Finnish state support was incredible. In the UK, cuts are pushing the NHS to the brink; suicidal thoughts got me on an 18-month waiting list. Here I was fast-tracked into free psychiatric care and state-subsidised therapy.

But as in the UK, the drive to put us all on antidepressants is strong. Sure, they help some people. But not all – yet our opinions are patronisingly dismissed if we try to refuse. They trialled 5 drugs on me with dire results before I raised courage to say no.

I quit therapy too. Controversial, I kept it low-key. Drugs and therapy tried to fix me, a brain imbalance or past trauma. They exist, but it's not so simple. But doctors didn't see the general shitshow of the present as a cause, or my behaviour as a way to cope.

Depression is crap, and we sink to different depths. But it's rarely a case of giving up. For me, at least, it's the opposite: it's trying, constantly. Surviving. So, some tips:

Speak out. This is public, so share it. Seriously, it's easier to count the people I know who aren't depressed, anxious or exhausted. Everyone's experiences differ, but just talking about it helps to silence the nasty inner voice telling you it's all your fault.

Listen. When you're speaking to others about your own hell, listen to their issues too. Now, or later if you're weak. It can be draining to support another depressed person; know your limits and say so. But say – don't just ghost them.

Be together. When we're terrible company. When we can't talk, or we want to rage. When we look like shit and haven't showered in a week. When our misery is un-Instagrammable. We've been there, so no need to pretend or apologise; just be.

And when we're stronger let's work on new ways to live, more than just surviving.

Notes to self:

Being an “artist” is not more important than being anything else. Pay attention to what other people do in life.

Thinking you “have to be an artist” even when it makes you sick is probably internalized classism

Stop thinking you have to live off your art to be an artist

In the current climate, being “successful” probably means being a bad person in one way or the other

People who “care” as a career move are probably worse than people who are just openly evil

Having followers on instagram doesn't make anyone interesting

The (lack of) solidarity in the everyday life of anarchists and leftists [or “*being the most hated person in Malmö*”]

I am an anarchist and most of my friends are either anarchists too or leftists. Many of us are also part of different/several minority groups. We participate in political protests and meetings and other activities where the thought of solidarity is the key part. We are showing solidarity with people on the other side of the world, and yet I tend to see a pattern where people lack solidarity in their everyday life. I have become a victim of it myself and I see other people going through the same thing all the time. When I tell my story(ies) I am often met with “yeah, that happened to me too”.

So. I was emotionally abused for a long time by people in my close friend ground. They were all anarchists. And, as if the very fact that it happened from the beginning wasn't enough, I got very little support from people in that very same circle. I have definitely lost more people and acquaintances because of leaving a toxic situation, than my abusers have from being abusive. I was shocked by the lack of solidarity that I faced the

following months and years. People did not believe me, they stopped inviting me to parties and groups, gave me long angry stares in public, and even got me to open up and tell my story so that they could reply with “people are not allowed to say such things about my friends” I was crushed. For the first time I experienced personally that solidarity amongst each other is often non existing even in political circles.

We talk about believing the victim, we talk about not kicking someone when they're down, about always taking the side of the oppressed. But there I was, with days and days filled with depression and PTSD, and almost no friends left. Years have passed, I have recovered (even though I think I will always have my triggers and flashbacks lurking in the back of my head, ready to pop up). It has taught me to look twice at people. It isn't enough that they SAY they are anarchists and blah blah what not. I need to know that the people I surround myself with would not only actually back me if something happened, but also call me out if I did something to them or another person. I do not want my friends to look between their fingers if I am behaving badly, just

because we are friends or lovers or colleagues or whatever. That would be unsolidaric. So of course I've also thought a lot about what solidarity means to me, how I want to practice it on a day to day basis. I have figured that I often need to say things out loud that other people might not do. I wish I didn't have to, that people would just get it and correct their mistakes by themselves, but we are not there yet. I have had no choice but to learn this, and I try to help people around me that maybe haven't learnt (yet). I call friends out. I have told one friend that they were not treating their partner (who I don't even know personally) good because of their own mental health issues. I have told people that this person you've just been on an amazing date with has toxic behaviors.

Is it fun? No. Convenient? No. I have to be hard and yes, I'm uncomfortable as fuck. People sometimes get mad or sad. And sometimes I even have to joke about probably being the most hated person in Malmö to be able to even stand it. I sometimes wish I wasn't like this and of course I don't want to make a thing out of something if I don't have to. But it's like I can't unsee it now. But I

try to be humble in my hardness. So me and people around me can get more of that humbleness, softness and love in our lives. That's what I wish we all could focus our energies on. But right now I feel like I need to be that annoying person, making people uncomfortable, being hated. I do have a better life than before. People that I choose to have in my life are people who I can trust. The more work I do, the easier it will get. Partly because I get used to it, but also because true solidarity is like rings on water. I notice that my way of saying "no, stop, wait a minute, is this really how we should treat each other?" is kind of contagious.

I know that it takes courage to say those kind of things. But if you've seen it happen close to you a couple of times, the step to dare is getting smaller and smaller and suddenly you find yourself showing solidarity. For real. To me, that is all I need to keep going. To see that things are changing, slowly slowly. I wish I didn't need to write this text, I wish this wasn't a text that people could recognize themselves in. I don't have the cheery optimistic ending to this story, because we still have a long long way to go. But we will walk it.

I don't really like talking about or showing my art. If I could, I think I would keep most of it to myself. Maybe sometimes I'd show a drawing or a little ceramic piece to some friends. Creating some stuff with my hands makes me feel happy and calm, but what comes before and after it is not something I am very excited about. Mainly because I really hate doing it alone. I often need to have time to myself so I can focus and dive into whatever I'm working on. But I think coming up with concepts and ideas on my own often feels very lonely. Plus I dislike having to exhibit it or sell the whole idea of it all by myself when something is finished. I really wish there was a way to work as an artist without the pressure to always be able to do everything by yourself.

I think a lot of this pressure comes from a feeling of always having to cater to the established galleries and museums so that they would notice you. This creates toxic competitive vibes that turns artists against each other. We struggle to get recognition and fit into a mold created by random rich people, with whom we don't even share the same world view. We believe that we have to care about what some shitty art critic or gallery owner thinks of our work, instead of working on making each other better artists, by discussing and sharing our ideas.

I think there is a fear that it takes something away from the work if it isn't made by an individual. That a work has to come from the genius brain (preferably that of a white man) to be real art. This myth has been around for way too long, and I wish we could get past it.

Then it wouldn't matter what the gatekeepers of those big institutions thought our art, and we could be completely detached from them. I don't want access to their fancy, hostile and exploitative world, I want them to be completely ignored and abolished. I wish we could create a space outside of it for sharing our art with fellow artists, and any other people who might be interested, without having to worry about "making it in the art world". If I knew I had a community of people that would have my back if I fail or if I am feeling low at times, I think I would actually really enjoy sharing my art.

there's so much to be happy about

i fell in love with a psychopath
we fell in love with a psychopath

we were a right hand and a left hand
and we were stuck on a body
whose mouth was rotting from the inside

this three parted body was dancing in the dark
the right hand, the left hand, the body
in, out and spinning around
keeping the hands far apart from each other
so that we couldn't reach each other's fingers

until
one moment when he looked away
it was the end and the beginning at the same time

we taught each other the chronology of love
the end the beginning the middle
we taught each other anger
the beginning the beginning the beginning
we taught each other swearing
the middle the middle the middle
we taught each other how to shout for help
the end the end the end

finding each other's hands in the dark
reaching straight out into the eternal night
and then grasp for each others fingers and hold tight

in the future we are both right and left-handed
and we wrote with both hands at the same time:

*from now on it's forbidden to give a fuck about the Dickhead
he is an asshole not worth any more orgasms, no more sex
fantasies*

thanks and sorry and fuck you

I've been hovering at the verge of a burnout since November. I can't remember most of the days. I feel like I've worked a lot and like I've achieved nothing. I'm an old rubber band, cracked and brittle.

I'm trying to keep a journal so that I could remember at least something. I wish there was Finrexin for the mind.

It makes me cringe how much effort the smallest things can be. I'm binge eating to still the anxiety, but it only makes me more anxious.

It's funny how much everyone talks about burnouts. Everyone's mother's dog has written a book about it. Being "a person who's had a burnout and learned something from it" is just another form of capital.

Why am i so unwell? It can't be just that i'm weak.

The art world was always in the service of power. We need courage and kindness. We have failed to be political. Even when people make 'political art', they make it for personal profit. We've failed even more in our personal practices. Go to most events and you'll feel the illness and exclusion.

We have to get better

A friend wrote one night saying that she just can't do this anymore, The uncertainty, the constant stress, the toxic masculinity, the backstabbing, it was too much. She had to do something else, she said.

Of course it wasn't my place to try to tell her she should stick with art because it's somehow 'worth it'. It really isn't. It's not worth your health. Sometimes people make up pretentious ideas about how art is magically more important than other things in life, but it's really not. Wanting to make art is really the only reason anyone should do it. Yet, I tried my best to tell her she should think about quitting for a little longer, because she's talented and wonderful and her voice should be out there. She said she's too tired.

It felt like a huge defeat. Not just for her but for us all, as a community. If she couldn't continue, if she couldn't take it anymore, then what the fuck was the point? We talk about support and collaboration, but what did that matter: We had let her down and we had let ourselves down. I felt so so sad. I guess I felt sad for myself too, because it felt like I had lost someone to fight this together with.

After a few days of silence she wrote:

“Thank you so much for all your your encouragement, you’re the best! <3 Because of you I found the energy to continue.”

I almost cried.

Memories that remind me that it's all good:

Around 1999 or so, there was a poster for the movie *Fucking Åmål* (Show Me Love) on the wall of the video rental shop in the small municipality where I grew up. There was a quote on the poster: "I'd rather be happy now than in 25 years". I found those words incredibly uplifting, albeit with their order changed: I'd rather be happy in 25 years than now. There was a future. I had a lot of time coming up, during which I could be happy. What I was going through was only temporary.

As an adolescent I used to bike to the top of a hill that was close to our house. I would then bike down in full speed while listening to *Bittersweet Symphony* by the Verve. My hair would ripple in the wind and everything would feel okay.

When I had just turned 16 I got a letter that said I had been accepted to the school I had applied to. I would get to move away from home and start over in a new place! My mother opened a bottle of sparkling wine and we listened to *Heroes* by David Bowie. Everytime I remember this my heart fills with tenderness.

I really wanted a dog. I was recovering from depression. I was so unsure whether or not it was an utterly selfish thing to adopt an animal. Was I doing it only in order to make myself feel better? My therapist looked at me sternly when I talked to her about this and said, "Why on earth should that not be a reason for you to get a dog? Of course it's about wanting to feel better. Nothing wrong with that".

A small list of things everyone can do to help each other:

Start a phone circle: Every member is responsible for checking in on one other member once a week. Do they need to talk? Do they need help with going to the hospital? Do they need food? Make it circular so that the giver and receiver are different.

Care for others when they're ill. Expect the same.

Amplify others, be happy for them. If you have a job opportunity or extra money, give it to someone.

Lead by initiative: we all need courage and precedents. This means showing both strength and weakness.

Don't assume others have money. Just because you're pushing 30 doesn't mean you should see having money as "normal".

If you are in a position to save some money per month, start a savings account together with one or a couple of friends. Put a small sum aside every month, to be used e.g. when someone is broke and can't pay their rent.

Go to each other's events, whatever and wherever they are. Especially if they're at "uncool" places.

Invite people to sleep over when they feel alone or afraid.

Share your know-how. e.g. in the form of grant applications. Create an open online repository of insider tips on how to get grants.

Live together or next door. It's 2019, a monogamous partnership isn't the only way to have a family. Don't be more conservative than your parents.

Ask for help. Don't dump your toxicity on others.

Make affordable art. Buy affordable art.

Make things together with friends not because it's good for your career but because it's good for you as people.

A small list of things one can do to build community:

Think of your self as constituted by the collective: you're not well if we're not well.

Actually call and kick out racists, sexist, and classist people. Actually take better people in. Do not work with assholes. Do not work with people who work with assholes.

Stop associating with/idolizing people who are mean, toxic, "cool", careerist. If they genuinely repent, give people another chance (within reason).

Actively de-idolize "hip" things

Don't do anything because you think it makes you morally pure or some bullshit like that. This isn't about you. Don't make your feminism into a career move.

If you have any position of power, small or big, give of it to those with less.

Make zines together.

Start a coven. Or don't. You don't have to be in touch with anything to be acceptable.

Refuse to pay for exhibitions,

portfolio meetings, competitions, etc.

If you have money for luxuries, start another account with a larger group of friends, and pool some money each month. Save for a year and then start distributing a lump sum to one member at a time, to be used for an event/exhibition/party/ etc that is collectively enjoyable. If you have 12 members and save 50 euros per month, then from the second year everyone will get 600 euros once a year to organize something fun/beneficial.

Think about yourself and your own friends: in what ways are you a part of the problem?

Think about the privileges needed to make the kind of art you are making: money? gender? racialization? certificates? what else?

Compliment strangers on their work. Become friends with people without trying to sleep with them.

Unfollow instas that promote careerism or consumerism.

Fucking say hi and smile to acquaintances on the street. Talk to everyone around the table, not just your friends.

When I was a child, I cried abundantly. Tears and mucus flowed, I yelled, and I was red. My sister, 9 years older, told me it's not worth crying because it'll give you a headache.

Crying is the best. Sweat and urine remove toxins from your body. With your tears, sorrow and pain flow out.

I know a person who doesn't cry. When we met, they said most of their life has been horrible. I've been present when they've cried, in their own way. It happens rarely and it is pure pain. Convulsions and howling, like a mortally wounded forest creature. Crying easily isn't a sign of weakness. It strengthens you. And besides, what's wrong with being soft.

The heaviest and most difficult thing is to realize things aren't the way you have wanted to see them. Humans make sense of their circumstances the best they can, in order to be able to live in them. It wouldn't be possible otherwise. In retrospect, I see a lot of situations where I sidelined my own feelings. Why had I done that, what was the point? Well, of course, change is scary and one protects oneself from change by explaining things differently. And, of course, there is a lot of good of which it is hard to let go of. But I've also made many excuses and I have been so busy. I'm no longer in a hurry anywhere. I sit calmly on a rock and see what's going to happen to me. When I feel ready, I'll take a walk in the woods.

You asked me to for sauna and dinner. You had made macaroni casserole. Being together was mundane and it was the best. It has been a relief to notice that one doesn't always have to be happy. As a friend said "It's really fine if everything goes wrong and is totally shit!". That's true!

The biggest shit is the idea of that we should be happy all the time.

You invited me to a party for no special reason. Even when I hadn't invited anyone to do anything, for I had no strength to organise things. I panicked and you answered the phone. You told me again and again that this is the worst moment and it will get better. You told me that when a moment is really bad, one can grab one's own wrist with one's other hand. We walked together. We ate together. We slept together. You, my dear friend, told me that we will share our lives.

Everything done together in private has helped me. You don't need proof to show the world.

I've noticed a surprising thing about love. You can't give away love. When I love, the love in me doesn't diminish. When I love, the love inside me grows. When I love, I never lose but only gain, always. The love I give benefits me primarily. Or, apparently one cannot give or receive love, it exists.

i recently sold 3 small works. my mom bought them.
the cash is good, though.

By

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