

Attention Must Be Paid

Category: Me, Too

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | January 1, 2023

I learned in elementary school that there are four kinds of sentences: declarative, exclamatory, imperative, and interrogatory. A case could be made for assigning the phrase “Me, too” to several of these categories. It could be considered declarative—an assertion of solidarity. Or perhaps exclamatory—a cry for affirmation. Or imperative, for these two simple words carry with them the voice of a command, especially by women who have been sexually abused or harassed, to be heard and valued.

The words “Me, too” have a plaintive note to them as well, as if the speaker is desperately seeking an audience that cares, that will offer its support. I imagine I am not the only individual who has whispered “Me, too” when depression wraps around me like a heavy blanket and threatens to suffocate me. I want others to take me seriously, to not dismiss me as “crazy” but to view me as a person desperate for acceptance. I want them to see beyond the stigma society has attached to diseases of the mind and to realize that mental pain, like physical pain, is real.

The words are also relevant in the case of the daughter of one of my former middle school students; her beautiful six-year-old has a severe form of alopecia, or hair loss. This little girl, whose smile can brighten the darkest of days, endures taunts from classmates and stares from adults. Even the sparkly hats she wears cannot hide the fact that she is completely bald. I’m not sure she’s ever uttered the words “Me, too” to express her need to be included and not victimized, but I’m certain she feels—rightfully so—that her autoimmune disease shouldn’t make her a target of verbal harassment and exclusion.

No one should ever have to turn to the words “Me, too” to ensure that they live in a safe environment where no harm will come to them due to their gender, their mental status, or a physical impairment beyond their control. While I support the “Me, too” movement, I wish it didn’t need to exist. Instead, I wish every individual respected and welcomed all people into their hearts and lives.

Linda Loman reminds her sons that “attention must be paid” to their father in Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*. So, too, do all of us need to pay attention to those who suffer; we must hear them and help them.

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