Leg Warmers

Nina Greenblatt, MD

She was sitting on the exam table. Long and lean, a dancer’s body. Bright green leg warmers (it was St Patrick’s Day). Her eyes big, sad, and puffy from all the crying. Her friends were there but in the background. They seemed less alive in their silent gravity.

She was crying on and off, hiding her face but then looking right at me. Wanted to “not need the drugs,” to do it on her own. We talked about what had been going on. Depression, panic nonstop. About bad weather in her brain, her strength and courage for coming in. We all laughed at needing warm clothes and an umbrella until the shitty “brain storm” passed.

It could have been me in her place. It has been. So ashamed to be crying/anxious/needy/imperfect. But I cannot find the path out for her. I can only offer recognition and admiration for the strength it takes just to keep going.

I talked a lot, too much probably, but our eyes met. Mine said, I know you, I’m sorry you have to suffer through this, I see you’re in pain. Her eyes said, Thank you.

If only I could be as gentle to myself when my own brain “storms” full of self-doubt and that enormous bubbling over of grief. Not to fix or cure but just to see. She was so sad and yet she looked so alive with her big red eyes and her bright green leg warmers.

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