When I was around 23 years old, I read a comment on reddit that planted a seed. It’s been over a decade since than but I still think about it. It helped shape a fundamental part of how I view the world, I am forever grateful for that internet strangers’ thoughtful comment all those years ago. Let me tell you about that comment and why I love it so much. Over the years I have looked for this comment, but it has eluded me, so what I’m writing here is from my fallible memory, so I cannot attribute it properly. Be that as it may.. It would be nice if through writing this, I can pass on some insights to someone reading this, (Hi there!)

The post in question was an “Ask me Anything”(AmA) post, these are posts where people can pose questions to an individual who in one way or another, can illuminate the interwebs with their expertise or anecdotes. The title of this post was something along the lines of “I was a combat Medic, AmA”. The only exchange I remember was their reply to someone who expressed their thoughts on how difficult it must be to undergo such traumatic experiences as being in a firefight and on top of that being responsible for saving people’s lives, facing the carnage of wounds... They mentioned how they couldn’t imagine going through that, and how the combat medic is a braver and stronger person than themselves.

The medic’s reply was fantastic. Since I can’t quote the original, I will explain what I remember.

They wrote with an absence of condescension, pride or flippancy. It was simply put, with an unshakable coherence in the belief they held and what they wanted people to understand.

Without downplaying their own actions, they offered up their belief that comparing one person’s sufferings and experiences against anothers, was not something worth doing. They wrote about how every individual has only their own experiences.. how emotions are only truly felt singularly within each of us. Therefore, it’s impossible to know what other people are actually feeling. It’s unkind to discredit someone’s pain, since you went through something ostensibly worse.

They acknowledged that as a soldier, yes they had experienced traumatic events. But they wanted the commenter to know that comparing one persons traumas to another’s’ is not helpful or healthy. It detracts from ones value and is something out of their control.

A person whose worst day ever, was when they were snubbed socially… or had a bad experience with a dentist. or got food poisoning.. These experiences are just as valid of an experience, as being shot at, losing a house or a loved one.. any other grief or misfortune you can think of. This doesn’t sound right. Yet the fact of the matter is that the worst thing someone has felt *is just that.* It’s the *worst* thing they have experienced. Call me simple, but I still am blown away by the truth inherent behind this statement.

these events that someone can compare the experience to.

While trying to figure out how to get the ball rolling for this section of my website, I had an interaction with another, kind internet stranger again.. on reddit 8) I wish that person a lovely life and thank them for giving me a way to start writing here! This is hard!