

**Recall a news report that you have seen recently. Illustrate your feelings as an instinctive response to the news.**

I remember coming across the living room one day while my mother was watching the news about DPWH contractors and government officials being involved in corruption, bid-rigging, and misuse of public funds. I sat and watched for a bit, and my only response was a glare with my eyebrows flicked and an undeniable sigh of disappointment.

My initial feeling was frustration and disappointment. It's painful to think that while many Filipinos work hard and pay taxes honestly, huge amounts of money are lost to corruption. I felt kinda angry. Not just because of the people involved, but because it seems like nothing ever changes. The investigations start, people are "named," but no one is actually jailed.

At the same time, I also felt a mix of helplessness and hope. Helpless because ordinary citizens like me can't easily change the system, but hopeful because awareness and discussions like these might awaken more people to demand accountability.

Moreover, I found it so unfair that when ordinary Filipinos commit mistakes out of need like being unable to pay taxes, stealing just to survive, or protesting for their rights, they are jailed or punished immediately. But when powerful people, who are supposed to work for the sake of the citizens who pay them, do things like this, it's often brushed aside. They don't face the same punishments that ordinary Filipinos encounter just because they have power. What's worse is that they don't even seem to feel any shame or guilt.

The same goes for those who benefit from it, the children of the very people who steal from citizens. They act so unbothered, like it's not their job to care. Instead, they continue to live in hypocrisy and greed. They even look like their greed, to be honest. I remember a friend who can't even afford a laptop even though they need it, while these "nepo babies" live with luxurious things and can't even dress properly. It's a shame that people who are supposed to be aware, to be advocates for truth and justice, seem to side with their greed, I don't know, because I suppose, for them, it feels great?

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Another news I recently came across was about Kim Atienza's daughter, who sadly passed away at the age of 19 in Los Angeles, away from her family. It made me reflect deeply. My initial reaction was shock, especially because she was known for being an advocate of mental health awareness. While we may not know the whole story or the extent of what Emman might have felt, I believe that the way she chose to leave speaks volumes about what she was going through.

It's something like this: the last one to arrive in the family also returned earlier than the rest. I think this is what we, as humans, often forget as we evolve; deep empathy. Kindness can go a long way. When we choose to carry kindness in our daily lives, we never really know that we might have saved someone, or made someone see a spark in their life again.

And even if you're the most easygoing person in the world, that doesn't make you an exception to sadness. Sometimes it painfully consumes you until you reach a breaking point. That's why companions in our lives are important. There are people who never show what they're going through; even when they're at their most vulnerable state, they still choose to show up because that's what we were taught to do. And while that isn't necessarily bad, the sad part is that when we wear this mask for too long, we often forget to take it off. Over time, masks pile on top of one another until suddenly, one cannot breathe.