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Clueyness: A Weird Kind of Sad



10.6k

March 31, 2016 By Tim Urban



10.6k

Clueyness is a new word for you. Cluey. Let me explain.



Clueyness is a new word for you. Cluey. Let me explain.

My father once told me a mundane little anecdote from his youth. It involved his father—my late grandfather—and one of the happiest and most loving people I’ve ever known.

One weekend day, my grandfather went to the store and brought a new board game home for the family: Clue.

He excitedly asked my father and his sister (who were 7 and 9 at the time) if they wanted to play. They did. They joined him at the kitchen table as he opened up the game, read the instructions and explained to them how to play, divided up the cards and put all the pieces where they go.

Just as they were about to start, the doorbell rang. It was the neighbor kids, who said they were on their way outside to play some outdoor game they all used to play. Without a second thought, my dad and aunt jumped up from their seats and left with their friends.

A few hours later, they came back to the house. The game had been put back in the closet.

At the time, my dad didn’t think much of it—pretty normal day in their lives. But later on, he found himself remembering that day, and he always felt bad about it. He pictured his father sitting there at the table, now alone, with all the cards and pieces laid out. He pictured him waiting for a little while before accepting that it wasn’t gonna happen today, then collecting all the pieces and cards he had laid out, putting them back in the box, and putting the box back in the closet.

Pretty random story for my dad to tell me, right? The reason he did was because it was part of a conversation where I was trying to articulate a certain thing I suffer from, which is feeling *incredibly* bad for certain people in certain situations—situations in which the person I feel bad for was probably barely affected by what happened. It’s an odd feeling of intense heartbreaking compassion for people who didn’t actually go through anything especially bad.

When I explained this, my dad said, “I know what you’re talking about,” and offered up the Clue story. Devastating. My grandfather had been *excited* about playing, and he was being such a *good, loving* dad, and he ended up *let down and disappointed*. He sat there *all by himself with the game board*, and finally he *put all the cards and pieces back in the box* because no, the game wasn’t happening anymore because *his kids would rather play with their friends than him*.

My grandfather fought in World War II. He probably lost friends. He probably shot people. He might have been shot himself, who knows. But the image of him quietly putting all the Clue pieces back in the box? That’s not fucking okay. And now, thanks to my dad sharing this memory, I live every day haunted by this image:



It's not just my dad doing this to me. Tell me how I'm supposed to handle [this fucking story](#), where *the grandfather made 12 burgers for six grandkids and only one showed up*.

Full Clue situation. And the story includes literally the clueiest picture I've ever seen.



As I read the story, I started picturing this NICE FUCKING MAN buying all the ingredients in the grocery store, in a good mood with anticipation for the night, then coming home and making each of the 12 patties by hand—*maybe even adding carefully-thought-out spices into them*—toasting the buns, and timing everything to be done at just the right time. He even made *homemade ice cream*. Clue up the *dick*. It continues, if you imagine what happened at the end of the night. Either he wrapped up eight uneaten burgers, one by one, and put them in the fridge, ensuring that he's later reminded of the rejection each time he heats one up to eat it, or, even worse, he just *threw them in the trash*.

The only thing that prevented me from taking my own life while reading the story is that the one granddaughter—bless her soul—showed up. Because just *imagine*.

And then there's [this 89-year-old grandmother](#), who got *dressed nicely* and put her paintings up for display at an art showing, and guess what? No one fucking came. Then she packed up her paintings and drove home, feeling "foolish." You know what that is? It's cluey as shit. *Especially* her choice of the word foolish in particular. I really don't need this in my life.

Movies know all about clueyness and use it to their advantage. Remember that super cluey old man neighbor in *Home Alone*? Who was so *nice and lonely and misunderstood*? The writers literally invented him to inflict clueyness on the audience so they could then release the burden of that clueyness at the end by showing him in happy reunion with his family. Cheapest trick in the book.

Clueyness doesn't only apply to old people. One time about five years ago, I was in a shitty mood and in a rush when I hastily walked out of my apartment building. A FedEx man was standing outside the building with his cart of packages, and he wanted to get in so he could leave the packages on top of the communal mailbox (I assume the package recipient wasn't home, so he had had no luck being buzzed in). As I walked out, he reached for the door as it closed behind me but it shut before he could grab it. After the door re-locked, he let out a frustrated exhale, and then he turned to me and asked, "Can you please open the door so I can drop these off?" I was already 10 steps away though, and late, so I said, "Sorry I can't right now" and turned back towards where I was going. Before I did, I briefly saw his reaction to my refusal to help. He had the face on of a nice person who the world had been mean to all day. The snapshot of that dejected face he made bothered me more and more throughout the day, and now it's five years later and *I still think about it*.

If someone asks me what my biggest regret is, I have to lie, because how weird would it be if I answered, "The FedEx man incident. I'm a monster."

Clueyness is a strange phenomenon. My grandfather probably forgot about the Clue incident an hour after it happened. The FedEx man probably forgot about what I did to him five minutes later. I literally got cluey about a *dog* the other day, when he was super excited to play and I was busy and nudged him away with my foot and he looked at me *confused and taken aback* and then went to the side of the room and laid down—and dogs aren't even real. The weight of my heartache in these cases outweighs the actual tragedy like 10,000:1.

But knowing that it's totally irrational doesn't make clueyness any less excruciating—something I'm reminded of every time my night is ruined by post-Uber-ride-when-the-friendly-driver-tried-to-start-a-conversation-and-I-wasn't-in-the-mood-so-I-gave-curt-answers-until-he-finally-got-the-hint-and-then-felt-embarrassed-and-stopped guilt.

I'm just destined for a life of feeling cluey about things. But at least I can take solace in a little headline I came across recently:

[Sad Papaw No Longer Sad: Thousands Wait in Line for Burgers at His Cookout](#)

If you're feeling cluey right now, three other Wait But Why posts to make it worse:

[The Tail End](#) – An intense reality check

[The Apple Game](#) – How good a person are you?

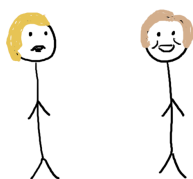
[The Bunny Manifesto](#) – If this is all a bit heavy for you, here are some creatures you should absolutely not ever feel cluey for

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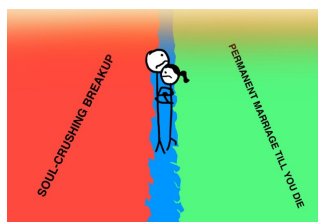
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Name



ninett • 11 hours ago

I guess mine is that where I grew up, pensions aren't all that great, especially for widows, or women that had to live at home with their children because the system wasn't built for children to be entrusted to people during the day (yet). There was a thin old lady with a headscarf standing on the street near the shopping district in town every so often, selling a couple boxes of eggs that her chickens had laid, and some homemade trinkets, like a knitted Christmas tree decoration or a little Easter bunny made of felt. Everyone always walked by her, not even sparing her a smile or a look at her crafts. Whenever someone did look at her, she'd smile the most sincere smile.

Every time I walked past, I tried to buy something, even as a school kid. I can't handle people ignoring someone so sweet and innocent and with such good intentions. She probably needed the money she made as well.

Another one that I experience all the time is the ice cream truck. I live in a neighborhood where the ice cream man comes in but no one ever comes out. He waits for a minute or two, then drives away. No one ever buys anything. I have recently started going down every time I hear him coming to buy an ice cream and to ask him how it's going. Then I have to try to persuade my partner to eat the ice cream because I don't even like sweet stuff.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Roger • 2 days ago

The worst thing I've ever done in my life (and I'm now in my seventh decade).....

I was about fourteen years old and had the opportunity to snog an attractive girl called Beverley on the train on the way back from a school trip. I didn't, because I hadn't snogged any girl before, and I was scared and too timid. I can remember the look on her face to this day as I walked off.

Thing is, Beverley had lost one of her legs several years before in an accident and she thought it was because she only had one leg, not because I was a gutless coward.

I've lived with this experience all my life and it's the one thing I've done that I'm truly ashamed of, and yet objectively, some might say I've behaved very much worse on several (many?) occasions...

On the other hand, as a civilian, I've won police awards for bravery when coming to the aid of others in extreme danger from gang violence, and have never failed to come to the aid of women when it seemed they were likely to be gang raped, always resulting in suffering a great deal of personal injury. But none of that means anything compared with the shame and regret I still feel about spurning Beverly and the look of hurt on her face that day.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Kratoklastes • 15 days ago

In Australian vernacular, "cluey" means "smart". If you're a "cluey bugger", you're clever about something non-trivial.

You ruined that word for me: I'm considered pretty cluey (in the Australian sense), but now it means "pretty severely autistic, or basically just a prick".

Coz let's be clear: each of these situations is only explained by assholery or autism.

① the grandkids who didn't turn up for grandad's burgers were assholes (if they told grandad they were coming and didn't) **or** grandad's autistic, and didn't bother to ask if they were coming and just ploughed ahead with futile burger-ology;

② the kids who bailed on their Dad and left him to put away "Clue" by himself, were assholes (when was this? There was a family from some time before I was born, where the kids could do that to their Dad - without asking - and still have a home to return to? **the fuck?**)

③ You & FedEx guy (and the dog) - seriously, that's some *jack* shit right there (another Australianism: something is "jack" if it's consistent with the phrase "*I'm all right, Jack - fuck everybody else*").

I've been accused of every anti-social psychological ill in the DSM, from ODD to Aspergers... but I would **always** help the FedEx guy; would **never**, **ever** leave my Dad hanging (he's my **Dad** FFS!); would

see more

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Roger → Kratoklastes • 2 days ago

's funny, isn't it? Thanks for sharing those stories...

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Akash Palrecha • 22 days ago

This is the most unexpectedly relatable thing ever. I always thought I'm the only one who feels these things!

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



BlueNews Podcast • 23 days ago

Hey man, I know literally EXACTLY how this feels. My parents are divorced, so allot of these cluey stories happen to me since my dad lives alone. One time, my dad texted me if I wanted ice cream and that he was on his way to pick me up to get it. For some reason, I didn't want to. I texted him quite rudely, looking back now, and said no i really don't want ice cream and don't come because i wont go. I didn't think much about it until my sister came upstairs and asked me if Dad was here yet for the icecream. I didn't know that he asked her for ice cream too. I started to think that he was close to our house, about at least a street away, when I texted him that I really don't want to go with him, and he shouldn't come here. Basically every day since, I think about how sad I made him that day. He was probably so excited to go out with his kids, who he barely sees , and go have some fun with ice cream. If i had a timemachine, I would go back to that day and beat the everloving shit out of me and go have icecream with my Dad, before I couldn't anymore.

What we need to learn is, it's always less sad in reality. In my situation, my dad told me that he really never even left his couch, and that he was asleep when i texted him I didn't want to go. For him, he was just napping.

In your situation, your grandpa most likely put the boardgame away as soon as your dad and aunt left to go play with their friends. Unless he didn't, and he waited hours and hours for your dad to return, sitting in the darkness of the room, waiting, alone. Just kidding.was that too dark?

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Calcium • a month ago

I think a good definition of cluey is when someone gives you a present and you already have it, or don't like it in some way, and then they GIVE YOU THIS FACE OF SADNESS AND "OH, I'M SORRY YOU DON'T LIKE IT I CAN GET A REFUND IF YOU WANT" and oh my god that kills me on the inside everytime I can't even.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Diana Dressell • 2 months ago

Thanks for reminding me I'm a shitty person.

Some sort of reminder, at the end that we can be better, or reframe would be appropriate.

Geeez.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Geetika Agarwal • 2 months ago

Literally the biggest regret of my life, that makes me want to curl up and die is denying a place on the swing to this kid. I was all of 10 and was swinging some younger kids around on the merry-go-around kind of swing, when this kid came up and asked to get on. He had a huge birthmark on his face and I told him to wash his face first before coming to play. That look of dejection and hurt, haunts me to this day. I would like nothing more than to see that kid again and apologize, tell him about how I didn't know how birthmarks worked and how very very sorry I am.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Adrija Mukherjee • 2 months ago

Yes,I had been feeling very cluey too once. I don't usually throw birthday parties,but since all of my friends were throwing parties,even I wanted be the centre of attention for once,just to see what it feels like. So,I made arrangements and drew up plans for my 16th birthday party,that was the second party I ever threw for my birthday. I invited around 20 people,but none showed up(except my best friend). I think that's what you mean by feeling cluey.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Lucy • 3 months ago

(Dogs are real)

7 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Judi H • 3 months ago

I have plenty to say on this subject but am going to forego all of it to say this instead: I don't understand why some people think it's ok to say fuck. It's not classy, it doesn't make you look cool. It's obscene so please just try and make the world sound like a little nicer, more pleasant place to reside in.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Fuck ➔ Judi H • 2 months ago

What the fucking fuck.

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



somebody ➔ Judi H • 3 months ago

I couldn't agree more with disqus_EqoBDa5Nay. You put a lot of stock into a word that doesn't need to be considered obscene. We were taught by our parents who were taught by there parents, but why? You expect me to raise my children without the ability to question the intent of something? If I

can not justify it what do I say then? Oh other people dont like it so dont do it. Yeah, right.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



disqus_EqoBDa5Nay → Judi H • 3 months ago

because its a form of expression. I personally don't see what's so wrong with it. its just a word. Now, i can understand it would get tiresome and annoying if it was used every other word, but once in a while (which is how most people who aren't teenagers or college kids use it) to express emotion, i have no problem with. what i don't get is why people get so offended when its not used to insult someone else... and to assume people only use it to "sound cooler" or to somehow portray themselves in an inorganic way is just judgemental.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Leah Newton • 3 months ago

My cluey regret is that when I was about 10 I turned down a cup of hot chocolate from my dad. It was early in the morning on a school day, and apparently he woke up early just to make me a special surprise cup of hot chocolate to go along with my cereal. But when I woke up and he immediately asked "would you like some hot chocolate?" I was caught off guard. I didn't realize that he had woken up early just for me or that the hot chocolate was already made, and I didn't want to inconvenience him. So I said no thanks. A few minutes later, I entered the kitchen to catch him pouring the tail end of the hot chocolate straight down the drain. I felt so bad. I apologized and said I didn't realize it was already made, but he took it like a champ, saying that his goal was just to make me happy and if I was happy without hot chocolate then he was happy too. But to this day I am still sad ☹ because he must have been disappointed to have planned this special surprise and then pour it down the drain. So cluey.

6 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Kimberly Drouillard • 4 months ago

When I was a kid my Grandfather suffered from COPD, of course we didn't have that name for it then. He couldn't stand long and or bring his hands above his head due to weakness. I told him I would wash his hair for him, my grandmother was long gone by this time. For months he kept reminding me that, by this time, he would pay me \$10 to wash his hair. To a 12 year old in the early 80s that's a lot of money but I had my friends to hang out with and just didn't want to it at the times he asked. We were very close but I had my friends.

About 3 months later my grandpa died and all I could think about was how I kept putting off washing his sweet still full head of hair.

I still think about till this day and cry.

9 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Izzy Mandelbaum • 4 months ago

I totally get and suffer from this phenomenon. I still think about a kid I knew thirty years ago and an experience I had with him that I never forgot. His name was Tony, he was geeky and uncool and I knew he didn't have many friends, I'd barely have considered myself his friend, but nevertheless he invited me to his 9th birthday party in third grade. I remember getting to his house, and nobody else being there, and asking him where was everyone else. All these years later I can still hear him responding, "oh...you're the only one coming." So we went to the movies together, me, Tony and his mom, and that was his birthday party. His life turned out fine, he's successful, married, kids, good career. But I still think about that from time to time, and how close he came to not having a single person show up for his birthday party. What a humiliating feeling that must have been. It still gets me.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Clueyfixion → Izzy Mandelbaum • 2 months ago

I don't think that qualifies as cluey, as you have nothing to regret there.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Mryddin Emrys • 4 months ago

Warning - extreme clueyness. Do not read if you value your happiness.

My most cluey experience involved, like many of the people here, my grandpa, who I used to play with when I was young. I was something like 7 years old when he got sick, but for some reason I was scared to talk to him. I suppose it was most first real-life encounter with death, and I was afraid of it. Anyway, as the days went on, he got worse and worse... first my mom told me that I should talk to him, but I didn't want to. So I didn't. Soon she tells me that he's too far gone to speak, but that I should still say goodbye while he's conscious... but I couldn't do it. I don't know why I couldn't bring myself to just walk into the room and say goodbye for the last time. But finally, he died... my mom told me I had one last chance to say goodbye before they cremated the body... and I remember walking into the room and seeing him lying there on the bed, just staring, and not knowing what to do. I didn't know how to describe how I felt about this until I came across this article... it's cluey. I had so many chances to say goodbye and I didn't... and now I can never undo my actions, and he's gone. I remember crying at night years later when I was old enough to realize what I'd done. Now I hardly remember him, except for my mingled fear and guilt and sadness... and clueyness.

I apologize for inflicting this on you, but I had to write it. Now you have to deal with it. Sorry.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



MJU → Mryddin Emrys • 2 months ago



I often feel cluey myself, but not with people that are now dead: whatever I did or did not do to them doesn't matter anymore because they don't exist anymore.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Ashley Clark → Mryddin Emrys • 3 months ago

I did the same with my great-grandma when I was little. She had leukemia and looked scary to me, so I didn't tell her happy birthday when we came to visit, or really even look at her the whole time we were there. At her funeral a few months later, I stood by the casket and finally told her happy birthday, feeling like a stinky little piece of crap.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Facebook User → Mryddin Emrys • 4 months ago

♥ I can relate.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



benzene • 5 months ago

The fact that this site died just like that gives me Clueyness.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Anne → benzene • 4 months ago

don't worry tim is working on something good!

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Amanda Gibson • 5 months ago

I feel like shit after reading this. Maybe that's the point. Will think about the idea of being cluey with my kids and husband. And try and do better next time.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Rachel • 6 months ago

I suffer from extreme Clueyness constantly - I couldn't even read completely through these anecdotes because they were too painful..

One cluey story that plagues me happened to my dad. He's 60 and a bit of a loner, but mostly fine just hanging out by himself and with my mom. He spends a lot of time at the gym and one day decided to jump into a game of basketball with some 20-somethings. I can just picture him putting himself out there to participate in a team sport with strangers. Well, he's playing hard and tries to make a quick pivot for the ball when he SNAPS his achilles tendon. Completely severs it. He drops to the ground and cries for help. Everyone playing basketball IGNORES him. He told me nobody came to help. Nobody asked him if he was ok. He had to crawl off of the court and out of the gym completely alone as everyone just kept playing around him. CRAWL. I'd beat them all up if I could.

7 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Overly aggressive nerd → Rachel • 5 months ago

You're not being cluey that shit's seriously fucked up. Let's fuck those shitheads up together

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Paulina Maria → Rachel • 5 months ago

That is absolutely horrific... Shame on them! I can't even imagine people who would do that.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Veronika • 6 months ago

I have cluey sadness too, especially now that my parents are elderly, I think about the bratty things I did as a kid, or mean things I said in a moment of teenaged angst! My mother tells me she doesn't remember these events, which makes me feel better.

My childhood best friend and I had lost touch for about 12 years, and when we were 39, we "found" each other again. As we reminisced, she mentioned feeling terribly guilty for a minor incident, since our freshman year of high school. We were walking to the bus to go home, and 2 popular girls from class asked her to go for pizza instead of hanging out with me.

She really wanted to be accepted, I guess, and looked at me, and apparently I said "go ahead, my mom's expecting me to pick up my sister anyways." And she went with them. I didn't actually recall that interaction until she brought it up, then I vaguely remembered that I didn't really like these girls, and wasn't bothered by not being invited.

I really had to convince my friend that I had no recollection of that day until she mentioned it, and she'd thought about it often and felt bad all those years! I'm so glad I got to tell her not to give it another thought, as she died in a car accident about a year later.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Kate • 7 months ago

Omg my life is filled with clues regrets like this that the people affected probably don't even think about. Like no kidding, especially this year I haven't been able to fully be myself coz of grief/depression from losing my long term boyfriend to drowning, and I've spent the whole year beating myself up over things I haven't been able to do not contacting friends for a while, putting off tasks for too long, etc for fear of hurting peoples

able to do, not contacting menus for a while, putting off tasks for too long, etc for fear of hurting peoples feelings. Even felt bad for my lecturer about failing a unit at uni coz he went out of his way to let me reset the mid sem test after I was to stick to show up to the main sitting. But in reality he probably doesn't give a shot. Thanks for making me realise that I'm probably just being way too cluey. To a point where its self destructive! I put so many expectations on myself while placing little to no expectations on others 🙄

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



PCS • 7 months ago

Interesting read. Here are my thoughts: In the first two situations (Clue Grandfather and Burger Grandfather), his "clueyness" comes from compassion and empathy, but the severity of the emotion is a result of a lack of perspective and, ultimately, the insertion of a selfish, quid pro quo dynamic into another's familial relationship. At first I agreed that both Grandfathers should be sad and feel really down and out, but then I thought about myself in their respective positions. If I was a grandfather, I would want my children or grandchildren to do what makes them happy, even if that meant not spending time playing clue or eating burgers with their old granddad. I hope I would recognize that my sadness and dissatisfaction is real, but embracing or wallowing in that sadness is selfish and would not do any good for me nor my relationship with my children/grandchildren. I would strive to play clue or cook burgers, not for my own benefit, but for the benefit of the ones I love - and I hope the author would strive to do the same. If that is the case, then feeling empathy is appropriate but the depth or severity of that feeling, the "10,000:1," is inappropriate and ultimately selfish in nature. The severity comes from a recognition that both situations lack reciprocity. So if you wouldn't wallow in your own sadness, then you shouldn't experience "clueyness." And if you would wallow in your own sadness when someone you "love" lets you down by not reciprocating, then (IMO) you don't really love that person or those people (or you are not loving them at that time). As for the dog and FedEx guy, that's just feeling guilty for being a jerk, which we have all done before.

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



John • 8 months ago

My wife and I both work full time, but have a 6 year old son. This means I work 0700-1530, and she works 0830-1700 so we can share drop-off/pick-up. This morning, I decided to go into work a little later so i could make porridge and have breakfast with my lad before he went to school. He and his mum are normally downstairs by 0700, so I thought if I got porridge ready for 0700. I would have 10 minutes to sit down, have a little chat, and only lose 30 minutes of flexible hours.

I had everything on the table, bowls, porridge, honey, spoons, Danone Activia, cups of tea, but he had decided to be naughty boy so he never came down in time because he wasn't dressed.. I had to sit there and eat my porridge alone, knowing he didn't have any idea what I'd done and was just playing up because that's what 6 year old boys do!

7 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Melissa Brown Tolson • 10 months ago

OMG, so much this. I was leaving a shopping center one day and there was a homeless man scrounging in the trash. I had some caramel popcorn and a protein bar in my car. I was late for an appointment and wouldn't be eating for a few hours; I get hangry so I kept the protein bar for myself and gave him the non-nutritious popcorn. I've felt like a dick about it ever since 😊

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Jamie Moffat • 10 months ago

Enjoyed reading your thoughts - hopefully the mindfulness of 'clueyness' leads to more appreciation for those in your life in the day to day - would be a good outcome to understanding the phenomenon

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Ruben • 10 months ago

I also suffer from clueyness without the person around. For example, when my mother made a sandwich for my lunchbox for my school trip. But as things got excited, I totally forgot about the sandwich that now was a mess of crushed bread dough and sweating cheese. Of course I couldn't break her heart, so I had to get rid of the sandwich before coming home. But even dropping the sandwich in the bin, without her knowing about it made me shudder. What kind of weird clueyness is that?

10 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Kriti Basantani • a year ago

Your articles add a new perspective to the already existing ones ! Love your work :)

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Z3nyatta • a year ago

I totally understand Clueyness and I think you might add saying dogs aren't real to your list of Cluey things :(I'm feel Cluey about it on your behalf.

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



gawkface • a year ago

Shouldn't this aching emotion be called "no-cluey" or "clue-less"(ly) - where people(third person's) exhibit no clue about the misery of the subject

I feel bad for my regular office cab driver, he keeps trying to upsell himself (how he drives so fast even though there is so much traffic and it's not his fault we are reaching late, he is doing his best, etc etc) and I

keep ignoring such conversation-starters because many people then overwhelm you with their stories and anecdotes endlessly.

That's where I prefer random once-upon-a-time anonymous acts of kindness towards strangers.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Jes Bewsey • a year ago

This kind of thing destroys me. I've actually gone back a bunch of times to apologize and explain to as many people as I could, and you know what? Most of the time they didn't notice, or at least they say they didn't. Doesn't make it go away, though, even when I all-but-KNOW they didn't really care about what I'd done. But here's what's great about it: this feeling is the thing that makes you say hi to that annoying kid who won't stop saying hi to you when you're outside for a minute on your laptop just trying to get some work done. This is what makes you turn around and pet the dog when you have 900 other things to do. It makes you call your dad. It also makes you cry uselessly at the computer because a person you never met wrote a for-all-I-know completely B.S. story about people who waited for love / acceptance / human decency that never came.

If it makes you feel any better, some of those people were probably closet sociopaths, so, you know, uh... yeah that doesn't make me feel better, either. GREAT!

9 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Gowri Addepalli • a year ago

Till date , I did not the how to express this feeling, but I totally resonate with this! There is just one word for your articles, 'beauty'.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Jem • a year ago

The story that comes to my mind is in sixth grade, when a kind of dorky girl from my class had a slumber party for her birthday. She had invited a bunch of people but only a few of us came and I guess the other people didn't even bother to say they weren't coming. Her mom was in the kitchen looking at all the food they had bought in anticipation of a large number of guests - huge bags of potato chips and what have you - and said "What are we going to do with all this food??" I told my sister about it and it hurts our souls to this day.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Emmy • a year ago

"[...] and dogs aren't even real."
I'm sorry what!? D:

15 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



gawkface → Emmy • a year ago

He was probably imagining such a situation with an imaginary dog
Or he might just be a cat person

Tim Urban is a nice kind-hearted man and let's give him benefit of doubt :p
I mean just look at his photo in this website's "about" section

^ | v • Reply • Share >



Joanna Berendt → Emmy • a year ago

This post would have been perfect (yeah, I teared up a little bit) if it wasn't for this dog remark. I just can't get over it. Just no.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Z3nyatta → Joanna Berendt • a year ago

Same. Can't share this solely because of the dog comment. Feeling very Cluey for the dog.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



John Dutemple → Emmy • a year ago

My thoughts exactly.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



mormon_free_ten_years_strong • a year ago

Chiming in with my experience of this emotion.

To set the stage, my grandfather passed a few years back and I was going through the stuff left in his house before it would all be cleared out. I came across a particular letter, a letter he had apparently held onto since the early 80s.

Turning back time a bit, my grandfather grew up as a herder of sheep (a "shepherd", you might say), and lived out his life with the self-reliance and resourcefulness he developed as a sub-10-year-old responsible for overwintering hundreds of sheep.

When he was 18, he left home to act as a missionary for the Mormons, taking a boat over to Denmark, living there for three years, and picking up Danish in the process. After his return, he spent decades translating, in his spare time, the Danish-language journals of his great-grandfather, who had himself emigrated from

Denmark to the US in the 1850s. As it happens, this great-grandfather is a semi-famous guy (at least in Mormon circles). I will explain why this is relevant below.

Back to the letter. In reading the letter, I quickly ascertained that it was a hollow, boilerplate form of a letter, reading something like "blah, blah, blah, thank you for your contribution, which we are very sure is very important, and which we will promptly proceed to ignore".

see more

13 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



Nathy F. • a year ago

One time, I was driving very fast, late at night in a mixed warehouse-residential area. There was barely anyone on the road but I was stopped at a red light long enough for a car to stop in the lane next to me, and a truck behind me. The light turned green and I kept driving at my usual overly speedy speed (it's Miami, I can't help it). Out of nowhere, I saw a cat that was trying to cross the very wide street and I instinctively stopped, not even as abruptly as you might think. But it was late at night and there was no red light or stop sign, so my stop frustrated the asshole jerk behind me in his super big, tough guy truck. He couldn't possibly understand why I was slowing down and ultimately stopped, so he ANGRILY ACCELERATED FROM BEHIND ME to the next lane, RAN OVER THE CAT, AND KEPT SPEEDING INTO THE DISTANCE!!! Ultimately making a right turn, otherwise I would have hunted him down and yelled at him. The image of that poor cat jumping up into the sky and falling hard onto the street, with its broken legs and broken gait as it tried to walk again, has and will forever haunt me. It's been like 4 years. I still think about that poor cat trying to get up again and never being able to. How it probably died all by itself, feeling so confused and so in pain. AND I ALWAYS THINK, if I hadn't stopped and hadn't assumed that the idiot behind me would have also stopped, the cat would've never crossed the road and would have lived to fight another day on the wild, wild streets of Hialeah (neighborhood in Miami. Look it up).

This isn't very cluey, because obviously the cat must have died and it wasn't a small thing that didn't really affect it. But still. Thought I'd get that off my chest.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



aimer → Nathy F. • 10 months ago

Ok so maybe your stopping caused the cat to be hit, but why in the hell did you just drive off and LEAVE it there to die, suffering? Now I'm all cluey for that poor fuzzy fur-face who was already unloved enough to be wandering around at night outside, but to die alone like that? :(

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

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ALSO ON WAIT BUT WHY

You Win

6 comments • a year ago

Gtowers27 — Yeah Tim you messed up!!! >:3 the secretness of the turtle posts was broken because they appear in the end of some posts... Now I dont ...

It's Going to Be Okay – Follow Up

567 comments • 2 years ago

TheRadicalModerate — I hope I can write this without screwing it up.The arguments Tim is making for why we shouldn't demonize Trump voters are fine, as ...

The Elon Musk Post Series

164 comments • a year ago

Ali Hayat — Yeah by the time this comes out the excitement will have turned kinda sour. Things have gone from being 'oh his lack of discipline is cute" to ...

Describe a day in your great-great-granddaughter's life

80 comments • a year ago

Yichen — She checks out waitbutwhy and realised Tim still has not published that post which he promised to publish to her great-great-grandfather ...

15 Comments

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Emily Shapiro

I actually think there are valid reasons to feel badly in those situations..."cluey" is just a word that diminishes the actual feelings of the other people involved by saying that they probably weren't that affected by your actions. Maybe just go back and open the door for a fed ex man, or take a few minutes to play with your dog, or just generally do nice things for people and step outside of yourself and your needs for others. Stop patting yourself on the back for being nice because you feel bad about something that doesn't matter and take some time to think about how those tiny things actually do matter, because they add up and can make a huge difference.

Like · Reply · 👍 7 · 40w



Nicky Pierce



Thank you for putting a word to the feeling that I have been feeling my whole life. Commenters have a lot of great examples that I can relate to. Here's one that gets me: Going into a small store, say an artisan selling their wares and being the only person in the shop. I think maybe the owner doesn't sell very much, or is going to lose the shop because they can't pay the rent. The owner seems so eager and hopeful that I will buy something(in my mind). If I don't buy anything I feel terrible. Sometimes I'll buy a small something just to be able to buy something. Actually, nowadays I just don't go into shops like that! I also get that same feeling at farmer's markets.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [6](#) · 40w



Katherine Gordon

How very thoughtfully put. And I absolutely suffer from Clueyness myself. A lot. Because of my college work (Liberal Studies at University of OK) I attribute it to being an Indigo adult. That is, there is a certain angst that goes with being smart enough to see unavoidable patterns develop. One of my friends says I am a "Cassandra" ie a person who sees the future, warns people, and is almost always ignored. I'm used to it, but still Cluey, on days.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [3](#) · 48w



Louise McMillin

"....and dogs aren't even real."

Hope you were being....not real.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [4](#) · 47w



Eric McQuilkin

What do you mean dogs aren't real?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · 40w



Kate Mada

humour?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 35w



Shannon Elise

Thank you for rounding out your post with a happy ending for Papaw. I remember that story making me feel very "Cluey," which of course got re-triggered when you mentioned it, but then behold! A surprise, happy, conclusion. What a roller coaster.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 26w · Edited



Jody Winter

I suffer from clueyness! Thank you for naming it. I used to call it guilt but when you weren't the one who caused the pain/sadness, it's not guilt, it's clueyness!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · 40w



Christopher Anderson

Wouldn't faze a non self important person. Acceptance. Kids bail on a game you set up leaving you high and dry? The world turns. Not important. Screw the delivery guy? Maybe forces beyond you did that, not your everyday act.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · 46w



Chris Lim

How about no one showing up for your 21st Birthday Party? A party that your parents arranged and spent money on and even had a card at the entrance for friends to sign on? Your family and relatives all arrive and they sit around feeling cluey cos none of your friends showed up. It happened. I was there as family.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 39w



Lara Roth-Biester

Oh my God. This makes me want to cry.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 7w



Solace Man

What if someone else feel clueyness for hurting u again n again you know that she will do it if you go in front of her but you still go to get hurt and making her feel guilty. You go cuz u love her and hope may be this time she won't be harsh on u. But every time she don't listen at all no matter that you have come from other city to meet her for 5 minutes she walks away even when she know she just break your heart.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 33w

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