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Kiss My Aster

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Dancing With Myself

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When I'm truly stressed out and start to fantasize about a life outside of retail and how it would solve my every problem, I know it's time to ruthlessly and publicly make fun of myself. Am I going to do a viral dance? Am I going to climb up on a counter and sing? It's public humiliation o' clock and I want to invite you to play along at home.

Am I going to don a flannel shirt, fishing hat and fake mustache to participate in a series of "Twin Peaks" videos or am I going to deliver a foot-long cactus, à la "Call The Midwife"?

It doesn't matter. I am down to clown, and something about it lightens my load and puts a smile back on my face while simultaneously talking me off the ledge. Also? It makes great content (which is the outcome of this situation, but not the reason for it). As cheesy as it sounds, the team-building involved in, for example, creating a short series for Instagram based on "Twin Peaks" (but in a plant shop) is invaluable.

Something I'm quite seriously almost expert level at: Creative play helps reset your brain and lets it know you aren't in survival mode. You can't be overly stressed about anything when you're laughing so hard you can't breathe because you're squirting red tempera paint as blood all over your employee, wearing a suit you bought on eBay, while he's laying on the floor.

You're resetting your squashed soul from the day-to-day grind. You're making cortisol think twice before darkening your doorway. You're daring dopamine to collab on a project, regularly. And, most importantly, you aren't considering chucking your career into a wood chipper.

Easy ways to do this:

1. Grab onto any TikTok or Instagram trend for dear life, do your best and forget about perfection. It's fun to watch people be themselves on the internet; if you ever need to reinforce that idea, just look up "people who have just had their wisdom teeth out." Being genuine is in—it feels good and the side benefit is that it's perfectly marketable.

2. Do I have a box of wigs and costumes in my office? Don't you? If I come sliding out of my office in a wig

after a tough phone call sending an email that made my stomach flip or working on something tax-related, that wig signifies the end of the scaries and the beginning of something fun. I can always double dog dare an employee to cook up a funny outfit and anytime we have a silly idea of something we can put Tyler in, we do that.

3. Aster Gardens News—I love to hold a stackable coir plant pole and talk to it like I am a reporter on the scene and give hyper local news reports from in front of the store. It's never not hilarious to me to report on a parade or a stuck train. I have seriously gotten messages from locals saying, " Hey, thanks for letting me know about the train!" which just honestly adds to my lore. Anyone can have their own 24-hour news cycle. "Just in! Someone just spanked a bag of mulch. It was me."

4. Doing "Twin Peaks" month last September is a crown jewel in my shop's accomplishments and I haven't yet come up with something to compare it to. If you'd like to see them, it's on my Instagram page under "Twin Peaks." I am extremely proud of all the goofy things that we did and how it helped me get through a super rough time. The whole staff got together and we just made it so funny. Is it good? Who cares!

We are humans and not robots and I feel like it's so important to say "hold please" to the total grind that we deal with day-to-day and replace it with our humanity, our silliness, our creativity and a reminder that we're real people. How better can we do that than by doing the unhinged thing? The unexpected thing? We aren't doing this for clicks. We're doing this for our well-being and overall sanity. Then we're going to let strangers and customers see it.

What could possibly go wrong? **GP**

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