

Tragedy is when I cut my finger. Comedy is when you fall into an open sewer and die- Mel Brooks

Shakespeare wrote some of the most amazing plays. For some of us, they are hard to follow in old English. However, these plays are famous distinctly because of one special trait each one shares: comedy and tragedy. These two traits seem the most unlikely bedfellows. How can you have tragedy and comedy all at the same time? Is there anything funny about a fatal car crash? How about a tsunami? Yet, a race car driver dying in a local car crash is ironic or even comical. A person who fears water but survives a tsunami is strangely funny. Tragedy and comedy make for great stories.

Relationships are the same way. We do them for companionship, love, and because everyone else is hooking up. There are many reasons to begin a relationship. Then there is the dark side. Relationships have tragedy, tears, heartbreak, and violence at times. People sometimes abandon a relationship of love. Oddly enough, it's usually because they began to love another. Maybe a bad father says he beats his kid in love. You know this saying "it will hurt me more than it will you." A relationship is a tragic satire. Sometimes it's so good or bad that you have to laugh.

I say welcome to the relationship swamp. The place where many things happen. It's like a swampy murky pit where everything and anything gets jumbled together. A swamp is people trying and get along at work, with family, and through community. At times we also find a host of things floating in the swamp like murder, adultery, and miscommunication. They say we should dive right into a relationship. Are you so sure? Sometimes they stink. Relationships can be painful and not very honest. I have found that many of my relationships are a sewer of tragedy and comedy.

At times, I have wondered why I'm sitting in the sewage that other people have created. Surely, I'm not the cause of the swamp, are I? We have all dumped something into the relationship swamp. Who have I lied too? Be honest, we have all lied to save face. Did you dump someone and given them heartbreak? I have fought people based on pride. People have rejected me based on their beliefs. It's a sewer of emotions and experiences pouring into a swamp of relationships. Usually our new relationships feel the brunt of the sewage we have experienced.

I have come to believe that if you have a good relationship, you are like the tidy bowl man. You look very clean, but you live in the sewer. It's the tidy bowl man's (or woman's) job to make the sewer a better place. However, daily, your pissed on by those who love being in a swap of negativity and beratement. I think I am positive most of the time. Yet, there are days that I feel I'm drowning in the sledge of society. Words and views from politicians are weighing me down. Policies and opinions are sinking me. Political correctness is sickening. People are not always who you thought they were. It's tough to be positive in today's world. It's a swamp of crud.

It's not like were looking for trouble. Every time I am off work, I tell my wife that this time I will go back and be quiet. I will not cause trouble. I'll just do my job and say nothing. Then ten days later I'm asking the wife what the hell went wrong? Relationships are hard work. I would almost say they are dam near impossible to manage. There are so many different kinds of relationships too. That means trouble has no problem finding us. Were seemingly stuck, because we encounter relationships every day.

Oh, work! The other day a guy on TV said to the graduating high school class "congratulations, you are now out of school and thrust into the working world of debt." An adult life might be free of school, but not free of bills and hard knocks. It's swirling around like a

swamp, surrounded and consumed by the sledge of expectation and miscommunication.

Everyone must work unless your parents were extremely rich and stupid. Providing an avenue to never work is a bad idea. How could you possibly learn how to deal with people if you don't work? Someone said that you will never know emotion until you have caused yourself pain. Work is a swamp of enjoyment and pain.

It's possible that work might add stress to our lives. It always involves compromise. Work can be rich in learning, but that only comes from experiencing trouble. In a way, work is also mired in comedy and tragedy. We want to be a boss. I know many bosses that wish they weren't. A meeting is as fun as a root canal. A workplace is the last place we want to be tired, bored, and abused. We will endure tolerance at work. This atmosphere will grow hair on your chest. Just saying...

We need work to challenge, stretch, and teach us how to navigate the swamp waters of people. It's hard to compromise, tolerate, and endure workmates all of the time. Yet, we learn to navigate through them. We learn their limits and our limits. Hopefully we gain a little knowledge of how to talk, deal, and live with people we did not pick. Possibly, we could even have better relationships than within a family. Work can be a helpful tool to how we do relationships.

Taylor Swift was telling a group of university students "you think your just bullied in kindergarten?" She goes on to say that bullying continues on into: junior high, senior high, university, and work. No matter the money or people involved, there will always be abuse and bullying. She is unfortunately bang on. Work can be rewarding, but you won't escape life's troubles in it. The crud of this world seeps in and outside of work. I wish it were not so. Work

could be a community of compromise, tolerance, and productivity. Instead, it's a rat race of jealousy, underachievement, and back stabbing. Oh, it's a swamp all right.

I know a guy who squealed on someone at work about their way of doing things. Did it affect them personally? No, but they squealed anyways. Another guy noticed that same individual cutting corners with a rule. They decided to mention it to management. Is it important to tell management if it does not affect you personally? Some say yes! Yet, your view is pouring negativity for no reason into the relationship swamp. Drowning someone for no reason. Why make work worse than it is?

Lets' pick some place safer like a church. At church, I knew an elder that frowned upon adultery. They neglected to tell anyone that they had slept with their current spouse outside of marriage. I know, in this day and age it's ridicules. Yet, in church circles it matters. Church is a huge swamp of *do what I say, but not what I don't tell you I do privately*. Somehow man-made rules go farther than God's own rules. In many cases, nobody ever asked God what he thought. In church circles there is an unholy swamp. It's created to guard sin and flaws. People drown all the time in that one too.

A swamp of people will have relationships with common themes. I have whittled it down to three in particular: endure, tolerate, and compromise. We are supposed to endure what the other wants. We are supposed to tolerate what the other believes. For fun, we must compromise our own beliefs for the sake of others. It's the good Samaritan or Christian thing to do. Even if you're not Christian you have to endure, tolerate, and compromise. Unfortunately, it creates a swamp of anger, stress, frustration, resentment, and a whole list of other nasty feelings.

I like to call it a swamp because of interpretation. People relationships are murky, stale, and contain hidden things that bite us like in a swamp. Those three words bite us all the time. Just try and compromise, endure, and tolerate without frustration and emotion. Good luck with that. We have painted goodness on those three words. Yet, people use them to talk down to us. Relationships live in a swamp of unpredictable behavior. We justify ourselves by looking like good doobies while compromising, tolerating, and enduring.

Take sex for instance. I knew a guy who only picked women who give blow jobs (how else can I say it). Another man rated each girl before he would commit. I hope she does not have a bad week. It's not just men, folks. I knew a head elders' wife who asked me if I was gay because I refused to sleep with a girl at church. Seriously! That girl chose a different guy because he would and I wouldn't. Our perception of sex is a vast swamp. Humans view people by sex far more than we will admit.

Sex is odd with people. It's both far less important than it should be, and given more credit in a relationship than it deserves. How much time do we engage in sex weekly? An hour in total? Ok, maybe 5 hours then. Let's make it 10 just for fun. There are 168 hours in a week. 5.95 percent of your week is engaged in sex at 10 hours. Yet, we base a relationship on it. Important, yes. Vital, sort of? Yet, no matter how you view it, your relationship will be affected by sex by no fault of your own.

People endure bad sex just to have sex. They compromise to have more children than they wanted in the first place. People tolerate bad marriages because the sex is good. To me, sex in a relationship can be a toxic swamp. Maybe it's better if we just have sex with a nice person, stranger or friend. Keep the relationship part out of it. My rule of thumb is that one always wants

more than the other. You can try and put stipulations on your relationship all you want. Just make it for fun or to have babies. Either way, one always wants more. Nobody brings in nothing to the relationship swamp. Expectations and assumptions are always floating around in a relationship swamp. That goes double when you add sex.

In marriage, sex is a given. Yet, sex and money can ruin a marriage. It's because we fail most of the time to communicate well. Why do marriages have such a hard time communicating? I think it's because we endure, tolerate, and compromise far too much. The fallout leads back to my previous point of the panic room. If it's not going well, we retreat. That officially ends communication. That just might also hinder endurance, toleration, and communication. Which affects sex. Then we have a waterfall of resentment falling straight into a relationship swamp.

I have encountered the Marriage swamp twice. A place where all the baggage and crud we own get's dumped in. Then we add feelings like fake, bad, happy, and sad to marriages. Every kind of relationship puts pressure on yours to be better. It seems that for most of us it is the trial of the 1st marriage. People try everything they can think of in that marriage. In the 2nd marriage, there is discretion on what worked the first time and what did not. However, we forget that the 2nd spouse reacts differently than the first. What we end up getting is a new set of problems we have not experienced before. Marriage can be a deep swamp.

Friends are fun. Do we realize that we pick friends based on what we like? Also, we are picked because of what they like too. A friend is really a mirror to who you are. Maybe that's why we pick so few friends in our lifetime. Who wants to see what were really like through more friends than we need. Friends are people too. They bring in their own set of baggage and crud. Just dump it all in the relationship swamp.

Pick friends and relationships that help you grow. Don't keep the ones that are like cement blocks. You might drown in a swamp holding the brick of another person's troubles. They just might add more crud to your own pile. The basic rule is don't keep relationships that help you die. It's so odd having life long friends. They take special work because people change so much through time. I know I have lost some of them because I or they became intolerable. Yet, a relationship swamp can become intolerable. We need to be mindful of who are our friends.

I love the swamp of volunteers. How can that be a swamp? Aren't volunteers nice people doing nice things? I think they are strange bed fellows too. We volunteer together for a cause. It's so honorable and nice to do that. Many serve not for themselves. People of one mind, heart, and soul. Not! People are people. I have had people volunteer and not show up. They tell me that there are things they won't do. Some are even rude to the people they are serving. Being voluntold is a good one. You're doing it even if you don't want to. Swamp!

We volunteer for many reasons. There can be a certain mindset. People like to brag that they serve. Some feel they are helping the less fortunate because they are better than them. It's a duty. A necessary evil to look good. People stab others in the back to get better recognition. I have seen so much swampy relationships in the volunteer world. I have found (it's both) a great training ground to be a good friend, and a wonderful place to make enemies. Volunteering is fun and a strange cat.

This swamp thing is crazy. People are just plain weird half the time. They want relationships, friends, and love, but it's usually on their terms. Meaning we need to endure, tolerate, and comprise with their insecurities, baggage, and crud. So, the swamp becomes a dance

or act. I fear most of the time it's fake. What do people really reveal? Instead, they let you keep guessing. Sometimes guessing for years. Swampy relationships, yeesh.

I love shows that have a Masquerade ball. They always look spectacular. Usually, there interesting characters hiding behind the mask. All we see is the eyes searching and diverting. I really love those intriguing scenes. A relationship swamp, is what it is, because of it's illusive, murky, and unknown mysteries. What are people hiding? Why wear a mask? It's simple really, do we need to see their baggage? See, a mascaraed ball would be fun. Yet, what is behind the mask? It's equally a murky relationship swamp.

We are forced to live in a swamp of people. We don't really get to pick the people around us. Sure, we get an opportunity to massage our relationships just a little. We gain lifelong friends and dump certain relationships. Yet, we are forced to receive people in family, work, and other places that we have no control over. They are hiding baggage, crud, and wearing masks. At-least at a mascaraed ball we intentionally hide who we are for the fun of it. In relationships, we hide much of who we are inside on purpose.

People also have little choice but to wade into this swamp. It's full of people doing human things. Their baggage is floating in the swamp. We bump into all their crud. It's troubling because we can't avoid people in a human swamp. What's in the water? Are we equipped to deal with it? Half the time we feel like were drowning or stuck. What if we could avoid some of the swamp pitfalls? Maybe, we could at least be prepared to navigate the sewage better.

It's hard to see a mask. Yet, I believe we all know somethings up. What are they hiding? I can just feel it. The crud in our lives tends to get on others. They might not know what it is but they know it's not theirs. It's like an ostrich. They hide their head in the sand. The logic is if I

can't see then they can't find me. Yet, we can see people with their head in the sand and ass in the air. Relationships are so open. Yet, people try and hide in them. How can any relationship be open and elusive all at the same time? That's where the swamp steps in. A murky place where we can't see it all.

I have touched briefly on types of relationships. There are sexual, marriage, work, and friend relationships to name a few. Within those are people. All kinds of people of all genders and ages. They all are swirling around in the relationship swamp. Do we really ever know what people are bringing into a relationship? Even people who have hidden trouble with gambling, drugs, and porn bring in their own unique baggage and crud. Many types of relationships present different challenges. All of it gets dumped into the swamp.

Before we talk about those individual relationships, I think we need to look at the masks people wear. The only way to survive a relationship swamp is to uncover the person behind the mask. It's important to uncover ourselves too. What are you hiding? I feel we have a better chance to recognize a mask on others when we know our own. That mask is guarding baggage and crud. Who is behind the mask? Let's talk about that now.