

**Six “Must Pack” Essentials to SURVIVE & THRIVE
The Wilderness of Grief and Trauma of COVID-19 and Beyond
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When we embark on a journey, we pack the essentials. These are the "go-to" items that are normally in our "carry on" luggage. Over the last 2 years, we were not “carrying on” anything because we were not going anywhere. A wilderness or an empty or pathless area has been lying at the doorstep of our very being. This emptiness and pathless area describe how we feel on the inside due to the Collective Grief and Trauma brought upon us in the events during these last two years since 2020. These six must pack essentials will help you care for yourself while being a “crucible” for others. As a “crucible” we, in the Healthcare & Behavioral Health & Support disciplines, are the vessels dedicated to supporting our patients, clients, loved ones, colleagues, friends, family and strangers. We need to be “melt proof” to the experiences and range of emotions felt in our encounters as we continue to face this extraordinary marathon with no clear end in sight. This “crucible” where we “reside” is often a lonely and isolated place. Today, we trade that “carry on” in for a “backpack” that we will start filling with these six must pack essentials. I trust it will grow to receive the limitless ideas and possibilities you add as your own "go-to" items. I encourage you to share your essentials with others embarking on this journey through the Wilderness.

***The Six Must Pack Essentials to SURVIVE & THRIVE
The Wilderness of Grief and Trauma of COVID-19 and Beyond:***

1. Patience

We already know this journey has been a long one. No one has ever encountered a Wilderness such as this. We need a lot of patience as we accompany our patients, clients, loved ones, colleagues, friends, family and strangers through the various changes they encounter in this Wilderness. Most of all, we need patience with ourselves while enduring a life forever changed. Find your own comfortable pace in this marathon.

2. Humility

"I cannot do this alone". A humble person knows, is aware of, and realizes their limitations. It takes courage and great inner strength to break the silent suffering of going at it alone. A humble person knows it is okay to ask for help. Just simply ask! With a little help, your Backpack will be holding the right amount for your shoulders to handle on this journey. And, there will be room for it to comfortably expand as it holds the “right stuff”.

3. Food, Tea, and a Blanket

Being in the Healthcare, Behavioral Health & support disciplines were tiring BEFORE this Wilderness encounter. For this new journey, we need sustenance for our own mind, body, and soul. Self-care is key. We need a healthy diet and know when to rest our mind and bodies. We may brew a cup of favorite tea, have a healthy snack, wrap up in a warm blanket, lose ourselves in a good book and just "**be**". Taking a Personal Time Out (PTO) to recharge our batteries on a regular basis helps keep us strong to continue this journey.

4. A Doodle Pad

Using a doodle pad, a journal, or any type of media, jot down or draw your feelings without judging them. Use any creative constructive outlet to let them out. We are human and have feelings that we cannot control. We can control the way we express them in a healthy and safe way. Our professions provide fertile ground that may trigger unresolved traumas, grief, and a variety of feelings. Give your feelings constructive expression and let them flow. It is a great release.

5. Forgiveness

We need to identify and release any extra/negative weight in our "Backpack" that is slowing us down and "LET GO" of it. It is that stuff that will not help us on this journey. Bitterness and resentment are two "weights" we sometimes carry as human beings. Forgiveness lightens our heart. Accepting the reality of life and living one day at a time allows us to focus on what we can do and regain some sense of control in this Wilderness of the unknown. Forgiveness allows us to carry on in the present being available for every precious moment. Resentment is a weight we hold on to, it has no effect on the other person. Think of how much lighter we will be to let it go!

6. Humor

We need to laugh on this journey at ourselves, with our colleagues, with our loved ones, and with those around us. Laughter is a great release. Humor helps us survive. I remember a time I put the toaster in the refrigerator. It was no wonder why I could not find it in the pantry! It was clearly time for a break. Yes, I laughed at myself. Can you remember a laughable moment?

Please make copies of "The Six Must Pack Essentials" and share it with anyone you know that wishes to SURVIVE & THRIVE the Wilderness of Grief and Trauma of COVID-19 and Beyond. Sharing knowledge and tips are gifts of love from one human being to another. Through sharing, we learn that we are truly not alone.

In support of you,

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Adapted from: Packing for the Grief Journey: Six Essential Items by my colleague, Cheryl Amari, MA,CT, GriefTeach.com.