

Minister's Musings
September 2021
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Can you feel the residue? In the air we are breathing. Landing on our skin. All around, whether we are indoors or out. I'm not talking about the humidity, though I could be. It's intense this year, given the heat wave (as I write, the forecast is that it will break later tonight).

I'm talking about the residue of collective trauma from the ongoing pandemic.

I looked back at the Minister's Musings from June and it's shocking how much I thought (I know I wasn't alone) that the pandemic wasn't over then, but the end was in sight. It reminds me of videos from a Canadian comic Julie Nolke. She created a series called [Explaining the Pandemic to my Past Self](#). I don't know if you will laugh, but I did. Laugh-wince-laugh.

Even back in June I wrote to you about the need to attend to the traumatic impact of the pandemic – in ourselves, in those we love, and in our communities. Trauma is real, and it is subjective – what is traumatic for one person may cause another person not even to bat an eyelash. And we all respond to trauma differently – fight, flight, freeze, fawn, feed. Some of us might be more irritable than usual, responding disproportionately with impatience or anger. Some of us might withdraw more and more, not necessarily wanting to, but not sure what else to do. Maybe you will recognize parts of yourself in this graphic from the [Trauma Stewardship Institute](#) founded by Laura van dernoot Lipsky, someone I trust and learn from.



The Trauma Stewardship Institute also put out the Tiny Survival Guide, which has suggestions for how to ground ourselves in the midst of all that is going on. Now, I have been to about a bazillion trainings on how to manage trauma – it was part of my previous profession before I became a minister. I have seen about a bazillion of these lists and have given out about a thousand myself. Sometimes they are helpful. But often, they can stare us in the face and chide us for not following their advice. And that does not feel good.

What I like about this list, and Lipsky’s approach, is that many small efforts have the potential to heal. For instance, look at the first item on the list below: protect your mornings. That probably made you laugh – but not in a good way. Especially if you are a parent. Who can protect a whole morning? Yah, right.

Just last week I took an online training with Lipsky and she said, specifically of Item One: take three minutes. As you are waking up. Before you get out of bed. DO NOT TURN ON THE PHONE YET. Do not look at social media or the news. Give yourself the gift of “less cortisol and more intentionality.” Three minutes, most days, will make a difference.

Tiny THE TRAUMA STEWARDSHIP INSTITUTE'S **SURVIVAL GUIDE**

- PROTECT YOUR MORNINGS**
[or whenever you wake up]
less cortisol, more intentionality.
- GO OUTSIDE**
[or look outside]
perspective, context + something larger than this.
- BE ACTIVE**
[avoid stagnation]
in body, mind, spirit.
- CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS**
those that are edifying + healthy.
- NURTURE GRATITUDE**
what is one thing, right now, that is going well?
- DETOX**
if navigating addictions
be wise + safe
limit news + social media.
- SPEND TIME WITH ANIMALS**
↓ stress hormones, ↑ comfort.
- METABOLIZE ALL YOU ARE EXPERIENCING**
re-regulate your nervous system.
- SIMPLIFY**
[less is more]
be aware of decision
fatigue + cognitive overload.
- ADMIRE ART**
the gift of feeling transported.
- LAUGH**
pure humor = a sustaining force.
- FOSTER HUMILITY & EXTEND GRACE**
self-righteousness
+ hubris = unhelpful.
- SLEEP**
to cleanse + repair brain + body.
- CLARIFY INTENTIONS**
how can i refrain from causing harm,
how can i contribute meaningfully?
- BE REALISTIC + COMPASSIONATE**
[with yourself]
be mindful of the quality of your
presence. it means so much
to others.

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I hope you can find your way into this Tiny Survival Guide. If you want, make an appointment with me and we can talk about it.

Because we all need each other to survive. I am blessed to be on this journey with you,

~ Rev. Karen