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Election Protection Checklist for Your Mind, Body, Heart & Soul

Since moving back to Iowa last year, I've experienced three of the ten plagues in the Bible, if you include corona-virus. My friends on the west coast have also endured weeks of wild fires and smoke; some of them had bags packed in case they needed to quickly evacuate. So emergency preparedness has been on my mind a lot, including in relation to our current election.

I recall after one election, just about everyone I knew went into a deep depression that lasted a very long time. It was understandable but I'm not sure it is useful to repeat that. Here's the reality: someone, somewhere is going to be very unhappy about this election. We're already seeing that. When people are unhappy, angry, disappointed or have other strong feelings, they don't necessarily act responsibly; consequently, their feelings and actions can impact the rest of us in substantial and even dangerous ways. Here's another reality: this election is not going to be over on November 3rd. It may be days, weeks or even longer before the final election results are certified. There's no way around it: we *are* facing a rocky period which will impact all of us, one way or another.

When you're in the middle of a natural disaster or a human made crisis, it may be a little too late to pack your proverbial bags and stay safe. As Election Day draws closer, I encourage every one of us to do a little non-traditional emergency preparedness and come up with a specific plan to take care of ourselves before, during and after the election.

Here is a checklist to help you prepare your plan, either on your own or with the help of a family member or friend. You don't have to answer all the questions but even if you only take 20 - 30 minutes to answer some of them, you may be grateful later.

Election Emergency Preparedness Checklist

- ☐ **Activism** – Have I done everything related to the election that I want to do so I can wake up on November 4th and be at peace, knowing I did my best?
- ☐ **Abiding Values** - What are my personal values, the ones I can rely on regardless of what happens around me? If I have religious or spiritual beliefs and practices, which ones may help me during this time?
- ☐ **News** - How much election news do I intend to watch, listen to or read? Which sources will I consult or avoid? Who can help me hold firm to my intentions?

- ☐ **Eating & Drinking** - What healthy food and drinks will I keep stocked at home? What will I do to avoid binging on foods or other substances that are not going to be good for me? How else will I take care of my physical health during this time.
- ☐ **Calming** - What will I do to manage stress in a healthy way? What works for me?
- ☐ **Feelings** - If my candidate loses, how will I likely feel and respond? What is in my control in terms of my response? How can I best process my feelings in a healthy way? Who or what can I turn to for emotional support if and when I'm upset? If many of my friends and relatives are likely to share my feelings, is there anyone "solid" with whom I can talk, someone who will be able to truly listen to me even if we need to take turns venting? A friend? Family member? Professional counselor? Spiritual advisor? A colleague? A pet?
- ☐ **Boundaries** - Are there boundaries I want to set with family members or friends regarding hearing the news or talking about the election? (Do it now and don't wait until you're ready to blow up.) Am I prepared to say to someone close to me, "I'm sorry but I can't listen to you right now because I have too many feelings myself?"
- ☐ **Breaks** - If I need a break, what will I do? For example, will I turn off all electronics for a day or several days, take a small vacation or day trip, walk in nature, go out for a run, work on an engrossing project, declare a moratorium on discussing politics, etc.?
- ☐ **Protests** - If there are non-violent protests after the election, will I participate and, if so, how can I do so safely given the pandemic and other factors? If not, what other avenues can I use to protest or express my opinion?
- ☐ **Strengths** -What are some of the good aspects of my life and others' lives that will continue even if my candidate loses? What are some of my internal strengths that will get me through this time?
- ☐ **Connection** –Regardless of whether my candidate wins or loses, is there anyone I will want to contact in order to provide support and caring? Who may need my help? Is there anyone with whom I want to make amends because of past disagreements related to politics?
- ☐ **Your Future** - Regardless of the election outcome, what are three things I will constructively do in coming months to help myself, my community, my country or the world?
- ☐ **Celebrate** - Finally, if a particular race goes the way I want, what will I do to celebrate in a positive way?