

## Welcome to the Party, Pal. We're Gonna Get Through This.

In Maine right now, everything seems to be in crisis mode. My rational mind recognizes that part of that sense is because I am sick. But my emotions feel roiled as they haven't been in many months. I haven't been inside a store in a while, so I have no idea what's happening in the aisles because I've been sick for four days. I became ill on vacation, which not only cut our vacation short, it caused a whole host of additional anxieties. But in my usually pragmatic style, I've engaged my "preschool teacher-healthcare compliance educator mind" to contact the appropriate healthcare agencies and follow isolation protocols. I've also agreed to be the very first person in my area to engage in a drive-thru COVID19 test site. So, thanks to my professional experience, I'm pragmatic about my illness.

I'm not as pragmatic about the panic I see in the world. Instead, I wish I could do two conflicting things at the very same time: roll down my window and shout, "We're gonna get through this!" and "Welcome to the party, pal!"

### Welcome to the Party, Pal

When anxiety runs marrow-deep, it becomes a kind of stress that makes the phrase "self-care" seem laughable. Yeah, we know all about that, don't we? The first indication of a whisper campaign. That first comment that *really* feels out of place and hurtful. That meeting we'd been invited to that turned into a "here's your resignation letter, sign here or else" assault. And these experiences coalesce at that moment as we stand at our front door, holding our keys in our hands, wondering, "how do I tell my spouse, my friend, my partner, my child, my family... *this*?"

*That* anxiety.

It's all around us now, in the world, on every screen. Everyone in the world knows that marrow-deep anxiety that makes the concept of stress seem like a picnic on a sunny day. Why? Because, once that anxiety settles into our marrows, it becomes infused in our lives. It becomes a part of how we walk around in the world. We begin expecting bad news any moment. We feel like we are left living and breathing the moments that broke our lives, the actions and words of others that wounded us during our journey through life.

We've had to pick up and move on. Sometimes we've had to move on with a smile pasted onto our face as if forgiveness became an autonomic physiological reaction because of our gender, identity, our vocation, our...fill in the blank. We've had to move on, keep going for the sake of our spouses, our children, our families, our life, our livelihood, our sanity. And we haven't had the luxury of running pell-mell through the supermarkets with the anguish, fear, rage, and sense of betrayal oozing from our beings.

We have, each of us, stood up, straightened our clothes, and kept going. However, we could, we have Kept Going. With as much grace as we could manage (which is a lot, just saying.) We have each kept going with as much faith as we could manage that some force of Good was still somewhere on our playing field, even if we could not actually feel or see any evidence in our lives at that moment. However battered our faith might be, we Kept Going With Faith.



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## We're Gonna Get Through This!

Once those initial conversations have been had, the tears shed, and that first sleepless night passed, we each needed to keep living. We continued to live and love for our spouses, our children, our families, our own selves. Severance packages, however small or insulting they might be, still might be pending. Uncomfortable meetings might even need to happen. New jobs need to be found. Relocations planned. New schools for children, new doctors for our loved ones, new people in our lives.

In the face of everything in our minds and hearts that would really like to lie down and cry, something in us says, "keep going, I'm not sure how, but I will keep going." In a way, we keep going by entering a cocoon as we keep going through the complete upheaval in our lives. We keep going even as the metamorphosis brings about a complete transformation in our lives. Whatever form the cocoon takes in our lives, we have a modicum of protection. And we need the protection of that cocoon because that marrow-deep anxiety remains constant. That marrow-deep anxiety whaps us in the forehead unexpectedly, even while we pack and move homes, or look for employment, or maybe even change careers.

Eventually, other topics of conversation might begin to enter into our time together around the kitchen table, in the driveway, in the living room, in our own minds. Eventually, this betrayal may not hold the sway of the quiet moments in our lives together. That first thought of "I am *so tired* of this being the only thing we talk about" might actually be a small opening for light to shine into us. It becomes a crack in the cocoon that has protected us during our metamorphosis from the shattering of betrayal to acknowledging those scars as evidence of our survival and proof of our hope for the future.

So, yeah, welcome to the party pal. Come on in, we've been here for a while. We're gonna get through this. I have no idea how, but we've walked along some broken roads, you and I, in this journey of life. We've seen things people can't believe. We've been hurt in ways that...well, y' know. And we're still here.

Come on in. We're gonna be okay. You know why? Because we're not alone. Across the world, even in the midst of ... *everything* that's happening, there is a network of love between us in ways we may not realize. Communities across the globe of people struggling for equity in love and life. Groups of individuals singing out for fair treatment justice in the midst of a quarantine. Congregations of many different faiths vocalizing their belief in the dignity and nobility in every individual's beauty in the rainbow of this glorious created world. Friend, partner, spouse, sibling, relative, colleague, parent, child, stranger, no matter how we move in the world each of us has experienced the pain of being wounded, betrayed, broken. And, among that community of unrealized friends, there are a lot of us who know the power of that metamorphosis of the marrow-deep anxiety. Some of us even have begun to have faith in that metamorphosis. We even know that "*I'm so tired of thinking about this all the time*" moment. A bunch of us have even experienced that, "*remember when...*" moment. There are a lot of people who might know this metamorphosis but haven't been able to put words to it. Some people have never felt it once but shiver when they think of it. There are a lot of people who have lived that metamorphosis several times. Inherent within that metamorphosis rests the nugget of faith in, "*we're gonna get through this, just keep going.*"

We hold that faith for one another. ***That*** is faith in action. We are that faith.



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So, yeah, I'm isolated in Maine. You may be isolated where you are. You may *feel* isolated where you are. But wherever you are, whatever you feel, I believe in you. You're not alone on this road: there are a lot of people who have walked this walk before you. This road is as broad as the world, and there are many different parts along the way. Still, two things make this whole experience universal: suffering is always painful, and suffering is like rain: everyone gets wet. So if you feel that marrow-deep anxiety and can't quite get to a place of trusting that we're gonna be all right, then remember: welcome to the party, friend. It's a sucky party, but you're not alone here. We're gonna be all right.

I believe in the strength of the faith we hold for one another.

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