

Questions for Women on the Road, LIVE:

How do you deal with being trapped, lack of freedom-when travel is where you find your mental health?

- First of all, TOTALLY fair to feel this way. It is really difficult to go from having freedom to not having any, and in fact-it is considered a loss when we have something taken away from us.
- My first question to you, is how do you handle your grief?
- Many of us feel confused for the many emotions that we feel right now, but if you lost someone, you would also be feeling a lot of these ways: SOOOOO, it is important to be kind to yourself....
- So how do you handle loss? What do you do for yourself?
 - SHOCK & DENIAL- You will probably react to learning of the loss with numbed disbelief. ...
 - PAIN & GUILT- ...
 - ANGER & BARGAINING- ...
 - "DEPRESSION", REFLECTION, LONELINESS- ...
 - THE UPWARD TURN- ...
 - RECONSTRUCTION & WORKING THROUGH- ...
 - ACCEPTANCE & HOPE-
- You may not be able to replace travel right now-none of us can, but you can release many of the same endorphins found in exercise, trying something new, and learning.

How do you manage guilt around what you should be doing, or FOMO?

- Shame is a focus on self, guilt is a focus on behavior. Shame is, "I am bad." Guilt is, "I did something bad." This is important to differentiate because I am wondering what the writer of this question is actually feeling-because feeling guilty for something is assuming you may have made a mistake, in which my answer is to be kind to yourself and learning to forgive yourself...
- But for many of us, we are feeling shame through these times.
- Tell me if this resonates:
 - "Nothing I am doing is enough." "I am not enough." "Even though I am trying to socially distance, I could always do more."...and ultimately trying to control circumstances that we can't control , and then shaming ourselves for the lack of control.

- How to control SHAME:
 - We all have different tapes that we “push play” to, I know for me, as someone who struggles with depression, it is “I am not enough. I am unworthy...”
- How do you deal with shame?
 - figure out your triggers. I highly recommend doing this with a therapist, and making sure you have a safe place to process this.
 - Reach out and share your story: Shame loves to live in secrets, which is why we must expose them to someone we love and someone we trust.
 - Shame cannot survive when being spoken (this is why secrets intensifies shame)
 - Talk to yourself like you are talking to someone that you love

Mental Health surrounding wanting to embrace Van Life when others try and stop you.

- It is like any big life choice, a lot of people aren't going to understand. But you got to think about what is best for your mental health, which will affect you long term.
- Acting like you're happy living a life that is not your own will only lead to more mental issues, including depression and anxiety.
- For me, I made a lot of choices at one time, but I knew I was being true to myself and I had wanted it for years before making the leap into van life.
- My dream became a reality, and my family still doesn't understand, but I know I am much happier now!

Having a healthy relationship with social media if its your only way to stay connected OTR:

-TOTALLY going through that. I do wonder how much time we are spending on our phones...

-https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-much-time-on-social-media_n_5be9c148e4b0783e0a1a8281

- When study volunteers cut down their social media use to 30 minutes per day total, they experienced a “significant improvement in well-being,” exhibiting reduced loneliness and depression, the authors wrote. Anxiety and FOMO

decreased in both groups, which researchers said could be due to increased self-monitoring during the experiment portion of the study.

- But during this time, when we are stuck at home, we are on our phones more for connection... I would recommend shifting from social media to zoom calls, and having more intimate conversations. Try it out, make a list of things you want to accomplish
- Highly suggest making a list of personal projects that you have for yourself.

Managing anxiety on the road-time management.

-WHAT CAUSES ANXIETY?

Being anxious, tense, fearful when threatened is normal and helpful, as the anxiety increases the ability to flee or fight the threat. People who inherit or develop a nervous temperament see the ordinary world as threatening and, if they do not learn to cope, will react to minor threats as if they were major. Hence the persistent and pervasive worrying.

-creating your safe place in your van: establishing your wellness toolkit on the road: for me, I love aromatherapy, so you better believe the van smells amazing; Rue is a part of it. She makes me feel safe and secure, journaling and music, some people really enjoy cooking (So find something you enjoy doing that doesn't feel like a hassle to do).

-Create a routine: something I think we can all take right now, and this can be especially difficult on the road, but even if it means implementing a few routine like things-for us, We have slow coffee every morning, and then I write everyday, and I take Rue on a walk!

-connect with people who support you: Living on the road, you can feel on edge, which is part of the thrill, but also, you can get in your head. CALL PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT YOU AND THINK YOU ARE A BADASS. It feels good and it is TRUTH.

-listen to your body: When I have a balanced diet, I feel so much better. Mind body, soul

-SEE A THERAPIST, betterhelp!

Is it hard to have strong relationships on the road?

I would say it has its difficulties. Living in a van is living in your own time zone.

Friendships on the road tend to sway from super intense to non existent. We will stay in areas for months a month, and then we are gone for months/ I have made it a point to stay in connection with my close friends from childhood.

That being said, I don't think it is impossible to make super close friends-the friendships just look a little different. They become a bit more virtual.

Depression and slightly lost

HI! ME TOO! Depression drains your energy, hope, and drive, making it difficult to take the steps that will help you to feel better. Sometimes, just thinking about the things you should do to feel better, like exercising or spending time with friends, can seem exhausting or impossible to put into action.

-BUT IT MAY BE DIFFICULT, BUT IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE:

-First thing I would do is tell someone you love and trust that you are feeling depressed. This is important because it's step one of accepting your feelings and it makes it more real-which is scary, but we can't change till we acknowledge our starting point.

-Start with small tasks, making coffee in the morning, making your bed, putting on different clothes. Things that make you feel stronger and empowered.

Why are we feeling so many ways?

Because WE ARE DEALING WITH LOSS

-many of us are experiencing symptoms of grief:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Denial, shock, numbness• Shock, numbness• Confusion• Moodiness and irritability• Anxiety, worrying, panic• Jumpiness, hyper-vigilance• Guilt• Feelings of helplessness• Sadness, depression | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fatigue• Disturbing images or memories• Nausea, headaches• Feeling vulnerable or unsafe• Social withdrawal• Difficulty concentrating• Difficulty sleeping• Anger and blame of others.• Numbness or feeling like you are not reacting |
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Coping with these reactions

People can take steps to help themselves, family members and each other cope with stress reactions.

Experience your thoughts and feelings

You have the right to have thoughts and feelings even if you were not directly affected and remind yourself you are normal and having normal reactions.

Talk about your thoughts and feelings

Even when the trauma is something that is being talked about publicly, it is important to talk to others about how you are affected. Talk to someone who feels safe to you.

Take care of yourself

Take care of your body by watching what/how much you eat, your use of alcohol, drugs, caffeine, nicotine, sugar and medicine and by practicing safe sex. Be sure to do some regular exercise and be more attentive when driving.

Take time

Be good to yourself—spent time with people you care about and do things that make you feel better. Take breaks, schedule pleasant activities, engage in positive distracting activities such as sports, hobbies and reading.

Have empathy

Each person experiences trauma differently and that you and others may have different needs at different times, try to be flexible. Remember that when under stress you may not react in a manner you would normally expect.

Moderate your news intake

If the trauma is widely publicized, be mindful of how the media reports affect you. While having information is helpful for some crisis, some people may want to limit how much they read, listen to or watch the news.

School and work

If you are having trouble concentrating in class or work talk to your professors or boss about how to handle your workload and still give yourself time to recover.

Take action

While you do not want to make big life changes in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event, find ways to express your thoughts and feelings about the trauma. Suggestions include political action, community service and spiritual/religious practice to name a few.

THANKS FOR HAVING ME!!!