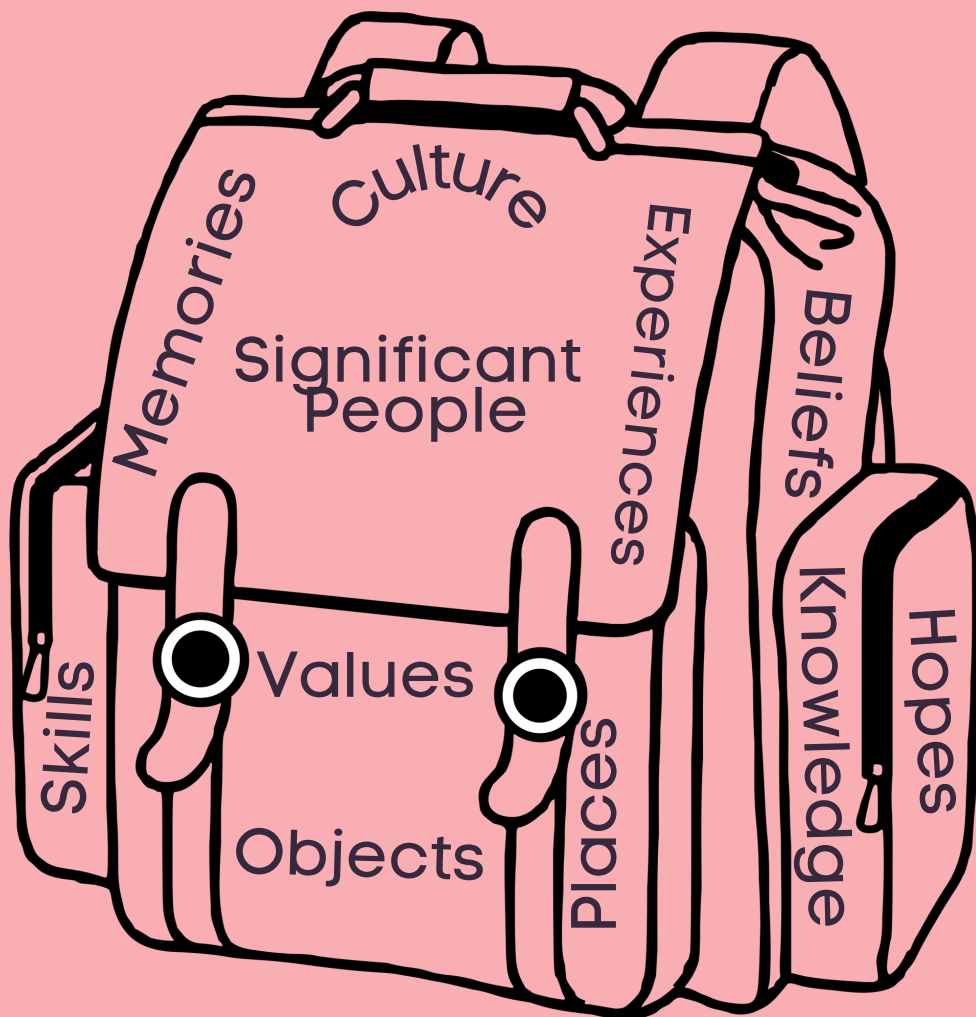


The Backpack

THE ITEMS ESSENTIAL WORKERS CARRY WITH
THEM



A collective document of participants Backpacks as part of the 'Exploring Sustainability of Essential Workers during Covid' narrative practice project 2020.

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The Backpack Project

The COVID pandemic brought about many changes, one being the way people viewed and related to the workforce. I was one among many workers that was classified as being an 'essential worker'. My role required community outreach support in homes or public places to meet with families. Since April 2020 I have had to navigate multiple strategic COVID safety plans that have impacted where my primary place of work was conducted, when and how I interacted with people and much more.

During this time many problematic discourses were at play that seemed to impact the collective 'essential' workforce. They included but are not limited to themes of :

- Resilience - often code for you don't complain or panic. This is temporary.
- Work from home – look how much free time you have, isn't it fun we are all in our pyjamas. The only thing that has changed is your location.
- Your community needs you – your needs are not as important as others; it could be worse. Have more gratitude.
- Back to normal - normal once existed, and we are ok with what it looked like. We are not ok with change.
- Essential workers - people and what they do have been classified as essential and anything outside of this isn't essential or valuable.
- Vulnerable person – this is their identity; they are dependent and unable to contribute.

My concerns were that if these discourses remain unchecked then what does society risk for the wellbeing of their 'essential workers' and the people they support? What message of value are we placing on essential work?

The project emerged from hopes of hearing voices of sustainability of many types of essential workers, showcasing their acts of resistance to hardship in order to continue to get through the problems of the pandemic as well as walk beside others in roles of support.

Backpacks

Throughout last year I was able to have individual interviews with a variety of people doing essential work for their families and communities. These interviews helped paint a picture of what life has been like during the pandemic, especially in terms of the impacts and innovation needed to adapt to new ways of supporting people and self. Furthering on from that, a number of people that I interviewed were able to participate in the Backpack reflective activity. The activity asked to explore the values, skills, experiences, knowledge, hopes and legacies that people carry when providing essential work. Over the next couple of pages I have compiled the Backpacks and items people placed in them, as well as some of the key reflections that came from the outsider witnessing/reflection team interviews.

Backpack Activity - an image or metaphor was used to help represent responses.

1. What is in your backpack that reminds you of why you chose this path of work/supporting people?
2. Is there anything in your backpack that has and can be helpful in a crisis?
3. Is there anything in your backpack from last year that may need to be taken out?
4. Is there anything in your backpack that may need repairs or updates?
5. Is there anything in your backpack that can be heavy, oddly shaped or uncomfortable, however its significance is worth carrying?
6. Is there anything in your backpack that is helpful when you have felt things are too hard or impossible?
7. In your backpack is there something you want to acquire or expand?
8. What is in your backpack that reassures you that the support you give is meaningful, influential or ethical?
9. Is there anything in your backpack that is inspiring or encouraging to you?
10. Is there anything in your backpack that helps bring you joy, happiness or delight?
11. Is there anything in your backpack that is new to you because of COVID?
12. Is there anything in your backpack that protects you?
13. Is there anything in your backpack that gives hope for the future?
14. What name will you give your backpack?

Outsider Witness Interviews

Interviewer's questions to person A:

1. Did you have any expectations on what this activity might be like or what you would get from it?
2. What was it like for you to make your backpack? Have you ever completed an activity like this before? Could you share about the process and overall experience?
3. What name did you give your backpack, and would you like to explain its meaning?
4. Are there certain items in your backpack that you would like to share about? You can say as little or as much as you like?
5. Were there any items that you found challenging or difficult to identify or place?
6. Were there any items that you felt were special to you and valued seeing placed in the backpack?
7. Are there items in your backpack that other people help carry? Could you say more about what that is or could be like if items are carried with others?
8. Would thinking about carrying your backpack and all its items change or impact you in your practice each time you support or care for someone?
9. Is there any item that you feel people you support (clients/family/peers or community members) would appreciate you keeping hold of, and if so why do you think so?

10. If there were a big backpack available to all the essential and frontline workers that was filled with wisdom, knowledge, experience, encouragement, hope, ethics, values and care what item would you like to add to it? It doesn't have to be an item from your backpack, it could be a new item if that is more fitting for you.

Interviewer's questions to person B:

1. Was there anything that person A said that stood out or resonated with you, if so what and how so?
2. Was there anything that person A said that was valuable, inspiring or thought provoking to you in terms of your personal journey through this time of the pandemic?
3. Was there anything that person A shared that reminded you of your values of how to care and support people going through a difficult time such as a pandemic?
4. What have you learned about essential work during the pandemic, and what do you hope to carry on with you in your learnings past the pandemic?
5. What stands out to you about the concept of a bigger backpack for all essential workers?

Interviewer's questions to person A:

1. You just had a chance to listen to person B's comments and reflections. Was there anything they said about any of your backpack items that stood out to you?
2. What significance do you think it could have on other workers sharing and listening to stories of sustainability?
3. What message could the bigger backpack carry for future people providing essential work to people in times of global or national hardship?
4. Any other comments you would like to add?

Servant Friend

"I believe I'm there as a servant to my kids or to my families, my school communities, but I'm also there to be their friend. To build relationship, to be the encourager or to be the one that says no you're being silly. Someone that they can rely on that is there for them".

Grey hair – Life experience, that came in really handy, especially with some of the younger parents and teachers at school, I could encourage life will go on, and we will get through this together. That was really good that I was able to draw on past experiences, being a person that has been through a few crisis and things like that.

Heart – My health and self care hasn't been that great in the last few years, I really had to back off in doing stuff, especially with covid, I had to be careful. I had to sit down and reevaluate how is this going to affect me, my family if I continue in a caring profession but I've been told that I should actually be out.

Family and Friends – Going home and the dogs greet you at the door and they are all over you because they love you and then the boys grunt at you. Watching the grandkids, we were in the bubble with one side of the family. Little grandkids running around, husband was great help with that. That brought delight, and it was a thing of delight, you were uplifted.

Physical Touch – I've always been a physical person, but how important touch is, not just to me but even people that aren't big huggers, they still like a pat on the shoulder. A lot of people have craved that. You can see evidence of that now, just at camp, there was no social distancing, the kids needed it, the leaders needed it. Its interesting looking at our physical makeup, we have been made to be physical, to be community people.

Medical Cross – Sickness, being empathetic and grounded. There was a lot of times I was wiped out. It gives you a lot of empathy to others that may have a disability that you can't see on the surface. I needed to go through, I learnt about myself and how I dealt with it, with family and with work and maybe perceptions that people placed on me, why is she sick so much? It was a painful one but it was good to go through.

Praying Hands – Constant covering, communication and giving it all back over to God. There were many times, especially during lock down, I felt the anxiety rising up. I would have to go for a shower, give it over and keep that communication going. I also asked other people to pray for me, I'm sure that helped. When I go into the school, I have a reflection app, doing that first, giving it all over to God and saying ok, what are we doing today, how you gonna get me through this day and then at the end closing that day, reflecting that day. It was the giving over that was the big bit.

Rock – I don't know if I can say this one, his head might get to big and we wont be able to get out the door and into the car (her husband was part of the reflecting team). Me: "I cant do this no more " Husband: "doona, sit on couch" throws chocolate (at me). Because of work situation, he was really busy at some points, but he was never too busy enough to not see how my week went. When he did finish work he was doing the cooking and the cleaning, I was free to do what I needed to do.

Boomerang – Indigenous cultural awareness, I was working very closely with our CEC and going out to families, they all think I'm aunty anyway. Really hard, you have two different family groupings that don't talk to each other. I run a carers grandparents group and all of our kinships carers are Indigenous and I'm white but its all good. We sit, we talk, we listen to each other. It doesn't matter what culture we come from we still got that empathy and love towards each other.

Bible– Knowing I'm an influence, I'm the bible they may never pick up and read, I'm the Jesus they may never be able to see but they can see me. Reading the word. I realise the smallest gesture is meaningful (telling someone) I've just picked up a loaf of bread for you, that speaks volumes, more than I could by bashing them over the head with a bible. My life is to serve others, love your neighbour as you love yourself.

Mirror – I can look at myself and see that people can change. I know there is no one that has gone too far that can never be helped if people help them. I can recognise in myself I needed a lot of help on the way and now there has been a change and now I help other people.

Uni (difficult to place in Backpack) - I loved doing it, and there was a lot that I learnt from it, but physically and socially it was just too demanding. So that needed to come out even though it was a great sacrifice to do that, I don't like not finishing stuff.

Special or valued items - I think they are all pretty special. I don't think there is anything I wouldn't like in my backpack, everything intertwines into each other.

Protection (item people help carry). I had a lot of people pray for me. The load is shared, you're not going on your own, even though they're not with you they are with you. You are the hands and feet, there were a lot of people that couldn't do anything, they wanted to do stuff but were too old or weren't allowed out. They asked what can we do and I would say, you can pray and you can give money for this and they had a part to play but I was the hands and feet.

Impact of having Backpack - If I didn't have my backpack I would be lost. I got that stuff in my backpack, I know its there and I know its solid, though they are just words on a page they mean things to me. I'm backed in my backpack.

TheMorganator

"Haha, gives me the tools that I need to be the person I am. Someone not to be forgotten".

My own experiences- Remind me why it's important to support others on their journey. I had previously done a personality test and I was a chocolate Labrador which have a caring and compassionate nature.

Meditation-Re-connection whether with people or land.

Fuller Backpack - Backpack was more full this year than last due to the experiences faced this year.

Spirit and Heart.

Negative Experiences - Sometimes my previous experiences although negative, have helped shape me and if I have negative thoughts about those experiences, I turn them into fuel to motivate me even more.

Culture - My connection to culture.

Change and Flexible - I never want to lose sight of being able to continue to change in positive ways and be flexible where I can. I want to continue to develop my leadership skills in an effort to continue to help and support others.

My Loving Family- They are proud of me. Respect given by others to me as a result of the respect I have given and earned from them.

The 4 Year Old Me - who didn't have a voice back then but survived an ordeal and came out stronger. She inspires me to continue my fight for my voice and the voice of others to be heard.

Family, friends, culture, connection with people

Resilience - A new form of resilience in the form of a stronger mentality.

My ancestors

Power of the People - To want to work together (it) can be done.

The Ready For Anything Adventure Pack

"I like the symbolism of the backpack as something you take with you when you're going on adventures and in that back pack are the essential things you might need. It's tools and resources, food and water".

This Year – 'image of an old farmer' - My professional practice and my part of working in this industry... my family don't really have a history of working in this particular industry, they had more of an agricultural focus...always been this value of looking out for other people and taking care of other people. Being mindful of one's place in the world, and what's happening around you and how you can be this element of positivity within, I see that in a number of my family members, my parents, grandparents and extended family members. When it comes to how I came to be in this industry I really do see a lot of connections to the values that have been instilled in me by others.

Foundations of my practice - 'Big Beautiful Old Building' – The qualifications that I have, the professional skills, solid resources I can draw upon to do the work I need to do, that is the foundation that everything stems from.

Boundaries – Being present, being able to connect with people, their story, be present with them in the moment and be there for them, doing that in a way that you can share space but not necessarily take it on yourself. While you're there and connecting with someone, you're not taking that on board, its not for you to be holding, its not something your not needing to be burdened by. It's a privilege to be in that space. Protect yourself and be strong in that moment so you're not getting caught up in what's happening.

Empathy and Compassion – Foundation for a lot of other things. I can see how that has been influenced by people in my life but also different experiences, roles, study. I think that has been really good value for other stuff in my backpack.

Isolated – I went quite a long time without having any close physical contact with anyone really, that was a surreal process in a way. For me having to stop everything and completely essentially shut away for a period of time was quite positive. I was able to re-access what was important in my life...enjoyed having the space to be able to do that. Being alone or being isolated I think its important to distinguish between that and then being lonely, because that wasn't the case for me at all. I was able to make some really positive changes in terms of my own self care practice. This pandemic which was very out of control, it was positive having these little things that I was able to control here at home like my own routine. Opened my eyes in some ways, it kinda created empathy for what was happening around me. Part of the reason I was able to leave the house was to exercise, by doing that I was spending more time by the park and the river, so connecting with nature in a local sense was a really big thing for me. Looking at my health and wellbeing, I starting eating vegetarian and looking at a vegan diet. I was looking at how that contributed to the sustainability of the earth and looking at other living things. That whole process came from being alone during the pandemic.

Boundaries within the backpack – My home which was my safe personal space was now my work space, by doing client work and speaking with clients in the home, my safe and personal space and my work space was some what blurred and that was a real struggle for me... that renegotiation in this new setting where everything is taking place in the one spot was kinda a challenge for me.

Exploration of Isolation - Something I really valued and never would have done without covid... isolation at home, and spending time alone, covid was an opportunity to focus on that because there was no other option, I'm not sure it would have been something I would have been comfortable doing if it wasn't forced upon me. At no point was it that being alone was unbearable, there were periods where it was uncomfortable but I felt content in that process.

Boundaries – the ability to sit alongside other people, connect and share stories with other people and in a way that isn't harmful to someone else, done in a healthy way. The pandemic was certainly an experience that everyone was able to connect with in different ways.

Self care - not being warm and fuzzy but actually a lot of work. Its quite a lot of work to maintain a consistent routine, its quite a lot of work to be eating well and consistent in your preparation and think about what you're eating, self reflection, be frank with yourself and explore that.

Self Reflection - To re-access where you are at... I think in a way covid forced a lot of people to go into a time of self reflection. I think its quite unfortunate that it took something catastrophic, the pandemic, to give people the space to slow things down in their life and re-evaluate what was important.



Picture of Ready for Anything Adventure Pack

The Values and Ethics Backpack

"I like the symbolism of the backpack as something you take with you when you're going on adventures and in that back pack are the essential things you might need. It's tools and resources, food and water".

Wellbeing (image of woman planting) - I haven't had much space for wellbeing for me. I think its really interesting working in a job where I'm constantly promoting wellbeing, specifically with the women I'm working with to make sure they are looking after themselves to be able to look after their kids and yet I am not doing that. I think not just self care, but self development, being in a space of progressing yourself in things outside of work. I spend so much time doing yoga or trying to invest in friendships or things like that. For me that's my identity and wellbeing in investing in myself.

Structure (Rocks) - Some people need an extreme amount of structure from me, but also an extreme amount of flexibility from me, so its hard at times to work out what they need at those certain times.

(Flexibility) Downward dog yoga pose - Flexibility... structure, two ends of the spectrum.

Advocacy or Shouting (image of woman with a megaphone) - I feel like this is just so me, I'm so vocal when it comes to my clients and so outspoken and will have arguments with services if I don't think they're doing the right thing. I feel like that's me in this image shouting, trying to get change when people cant do that themselves.

Support network - Important to have people on your team and on your side... work space and in personal space. I'm really grateful to have some really nice people in my life that do genuinely represent me in a work setting and personal setting. With people who don't have those...you're having to be that person...it's a lot of pressure but its nice to know.

Structure vs flexibility - I think you have to be casual and relaxed in this job. If you go into someone's home and you're stressed and anxious, they're gonna feel that energy. I always try to be really reassuring... think recognising, how do I say it. Am I a structured worker or a flexible worker, or

do I need to change that every single time I go out or with every person. When worse case scenario happens when working with a family, I questioned my own ethics and values, should I have been more structured or flexible.

Paperwork (typewriter) - You feel like you're just drowning in it sometimes, there are people that can you help you with that, there are people that can make that worse as well. I could go out and have a conversation with someone, I'm flexible. I think you do the work, you have the conversations, but everything you do you have to log, and then you are buried under two weeks worth of stuff you're supposed to log. I think we would do our clients a real service if we identified things earlier. I feel like I owe the families, they come to the service, I'm gonna give them the best service that I can.

Backpack questions - Prompted thought, definitely I think it is a really good tool to think about. I don't think we are given enough space to be prompted to have this thought as workers. Whenever I have conversations with clients...it is good to have these images of how and what I do and what I have a problem with, because at least I'm aware of it and can deal with it. You think of your framework...but this made it physical, easier to visualise.

Support network - Many of my clients, I'm the person they would call and maybe one of the only people they have. They know I'm a 9-5 service and can't drop everything and answer every call, but for the most part they say they are grateful for that connection. The professional boundaries exist, but to a certain degree you have to offer a little bit of yourself to connect with somebody because they are offering everything to you, and you're expected to be this blank canvas that is professional. I have conversations that are outside of work, they need to know who you are. You have to be a little flexible with that.

Clearer communication from services - Having worked in other countries ... It would be good if there was clearer communication between services to provide the best level of support as the families need it. Rather than being blindsided by child safety just showing up. A level of support could have been provided to a family had I known this is something you were going to do. Rather than me try to clean up after they have come in and shook this family significantly and left me to have conversations with a family. We could have done this in a fairer way if you had of just communicated.



Picture of the Values and Ethics Backpack

The Tension Backpack

"A lot of the things in it present in one way, but a lot of the things (have) conflicting thoughts and feelings. The same one item has two things pulling it in different directions to what I'm dealing with. I call it tension not because its stressful, but it's tension suspending between to different directions and how I feel about it".

Fathers holding children – Memories and experiencing I've gone through with my dad passing, but also some very strong personalities and male role models that have come through in my life and help support me. I chose the path that I'm on because my life has been shaped by all those individuals that have helped and supported me. It was almost like a second nature because I knew how much it helped and supported me and I appreciated that.

My faith – Reassurance and perseverance with what I'm going through, there is a hope that I have because of my faith.

Write a list and Holding a seed – Some of the crisis's I have been in sometimes it comes down to the fact that I am practical and there are some things that need to be done, I can have that attention to detail that, maybe in amongst it, other people are missing. In a crisis I'm not always the person that will help with the words or emotions but there are some things I know I can pick up.

Isolation and responsibility – I'm working very very hard to take out these two things. I started my role, and then covid happened, I didn't have a chance to build up support networks, I didn't have a chance to set up a whole heap of things that I would have liked to that would have helped to sustain me better during the pandemic. Because of that I have felt very alone in my job. The job that I am in, there is responsibility to be overcoming all these challenges of isolation, to be more engaging with people despite the fact that we are further away from people and I think that has brought on guilt. I think that unjustified sense of responsibility, things I'm not responsible for, I'm keen to get rid of that.

Self care – Isolation with the sense of doing so much I'm taking the last step in a long line of steps of responsibility, that is huge. My bag is a duffle bag, because I feel like everything is a bit rough and thrown in together. Inside the duffle bag in the middle there are things with that tension there that I don't like to really put out there, but they are vital to it.

My Hearing – Lot of issues when I am talking to kids, causes a lot of issues when talking to my wife, hearing things that are going around, when the bells go off at school I have no idea what they are saying, I usually have to ask the kids, what does that mean, because I can't hear.

Fatherhood – Odd shaped one, I don't know about the prospects of having kids, but I have so many other children that I am taking care of, it brings up elements of experiences of my own dad dying, brings up grief, loss, sadness and hurting and it has also inspired me. Its oddly shaped, but I wouldn't be having the conversations that I'm having without it.

Wall of Speakers – Music is a lovely little release. When things are too hard I just switch off for a bit.

Family, Solitude and Nature – Just being away with the core of my family which is my wife and God, and being in nature in that solitude. Solitude is really encouraging compared to isolation. Solitude is being alone with those that are important, that are good and build me up.

Water hen balancing on lily pads – Balance life, work, home, studies. There may be times where I'm still on the edge of things, I could fall at any second but finding a way to keep with it. The interactions I have with people, the relationships I build up and the appreciation. There are so many people that I am helping through the week even if it is a small amount of time, which has been really reassuring to me that what I am doing is influential and ethical.

Plant Growing – Through all these interactions...hope for change, the new life, whatever that might be.

Roast Chook and a Kite – I love cooking and I love games. I felt guilty that I didn't say family, but then when I thought about it whenever I'm cooking or playing games its with family or for family or a bunch of people.

Perspective, a fella looking out of the window of an aeroplane – It's placed between the cross and books. I've had some elements of fear and stuff has come up new because of covid. I was not having any contact with my mum and brother because they are both susceptible, and then the one weekend I went over there to say hello and give hugs because I thought we were in the clear, I found out that the week that I had worked prior there had been a positive covid case at my school. I have never been in a situation where I have genuinely been afraid of going somewhere, not necessarily for my safety but for my family as well.

Scripture - God not having any word returning void, encouraged whatever interaction I have I know there is something positive there, I may not necessarily see it or know what, but I have a hope in Christ that something is coming from that.

Pin Pointing Things - I had trouble emotionally trying figure out some, things about my dad.

Games - Even though I do a lot of serious stuff, having fun is important.

Passion - There are so many other people that are just as passionate and helpful with things, even practical things.

Remembering - Reasons I do what I am doing. Remembering all the other things I have in there, like self care that is not isolating.

Faith - It is already advertised that I have it, I think people appreciate this. I hope there is an appreciation for me as a person, not just the things I do as a result of that.

Perspective - Although we are going through covid and its horrible, the world has gone through similar things in the past...that's not to dismiss or belittle what is going on right now, but perspective is a valuable thing to stop us from being overwhelmed by what we are going through and make us feel ok with what we feel in the situation. Perspective also allows for hope. Perspective for essential workers is good, we can get a different perspective of what someone might be going through, rather than assumptions or judgement.



Picture of The Tension Backpack

The Explore and Life Learner Backpack

"My own exploration of myself, life, and exploration with people. I do like to explore human behaviour and people. Travel is such a big part of my life and really important to me, it made me reflect because we cant do too many overseas trips at the moment. Life Long Learner – both the terms I already know about myself, because I do really like to learn and always taking on new things".

Tree - Nature is our healing gift. Since covid I have been way more connected to nature, more aware of nature around me, taking time out in nature, looking at ways I can reduce my carbon footprint and having that more at the forefront of my mind.

Caring for country - Has been quite prevalent for me in the last year.

Holding a safe space, a little worm under a tree - Even the quiet souls will tell you who they are if you just listen, I really like that, it reminded me of why I like counselling so much... I love holding a safe space for people, and getting trust in someone to open up to me and that drives me. That was a good reminder, because it has been a really stagnate, shitty year. I haven't done a lot of active counselling its just been surface type stuff.

Neglect – I neglected myself to take care of others. Covid made me slow down, and my body started to react to stress, I could feel stress but I actually didn't react to stress. It's out of my backpack but a reminder to take care of myself.

Growth and healing – Why I choose this path. When I saw this I thought about my ancestors, I thought about stolen generation, I thought about disconnection of culture, even though it's a dark picture, I saw this as growth and healing, a way a person is grounded and holding onto the tree getting some life again.

Peace and Calm – One of the biggest things that has got me through covid, working on my breath, particularly my sister being down south (Melbourne), we didn't know what was happening...not being able to be physically with her...also with mum and dad.

Lots of loved ones that I wasn't able to see, going back to that peace and calm place helped me get through. At the same time I allowed myself to have times when it was really shitty and I was struggling as well.

Direction – I feel like this is always there in terms of my career and where I wanna go, I don't do well with a lot of options, lots of options always throw me off, I feel like im always doing the where to next, but I kinda seem to just bumble along.

Child and Adult planting – Mentoring our future, I put that under Direction because I have thought a lot more about where I would like to go. I would like to provide more supervision to workers. With Child...she knows not to waste water, to compost, recycle, not to waste food, its up to us to instil that in our children as well.

Believe in Faith – That went in with peace and calm.

Exploring, someone driving, going on a road trip - I look at that now, I chose that because I love travel but I think, exploring closer to home, that's something I've always wanted to do. Exploring keeps me curious, motivated, alive, and inspired.

Faith in the universe – When everything changed it went very quickly, we were in the clinic, it was full on to have all the waiting room cleared out and all of a sudden all of our workers were no longer allowed to work or were in different positions, dentists cleaning, it was all very weird. Going back to faith in the universe, it is what it is and we just gotta roll with it.

Family – Making time for family. We have a very bustling social life, just being home, the simple things, it made me grateful, I like being at home with husband and child. I like being simple, we don't need anything wizz bang, it's the simple things we find happiness in.

Caring for Country, bee and flower - Now more than ever, I think before covid, my connection and my own identity...I've always had troubles with my own aboriginal identity, and knowing there is a big part of my identity that I'll never know about, but caring for country is something I can take responsibility for. I feel this could be a big thing for anybody that is struggling with identity, you can really care for the country that you live on as my ancestors did. I may not have a connection to them as such in other ways, but I can have a connection with them through taking care of country and get my child to take care of country as well.

Star – Not a perfect star and lots of love hearts and stars. It says there is nothing more captivating than a woman who remembers the magic she is. I liked that, it goes with confidence and it has been long running with me, my own confidence to just take a leap and do things. I'm really confident with other people, in doing things. The more deeper things with myself are more difficult.

Neglect - This one was difficult to place, because it was me directly, I didn't want to put it on there, but I thought no I will be real and put it on there. I say I take care of myself, I do, but there is a lot more I could do.

Caring for country – How eco anxiety has been there for a long time, I'll just ignore it, ignore it, I know its bad but I'll ignore it. I'm educating myself slowing and making changes where I can make changes. It doesn't feel nice, you look around and see other people not taking care of country, but its worth holding onto.

Holding safe space for people – That's what I need to go back to more, remembering not everybody can do that for people, and people don't want that from people. Remembering that it is special that I get to do that for work. I was quite surprised how nature came up, its always been there but it seems more prevalent since slowing down.

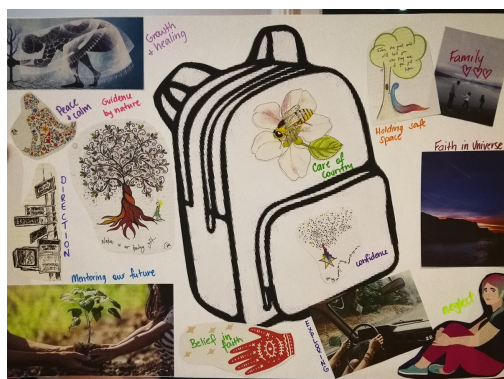
Family – Within our little immediate family my husband and I tag team and compliment each other and are very good at raising our child together. It's a real strength of ours, we carry that together. I think not having him here would take a big chunk away...life would be very different. To carry it together means we can be there for our child and she gets the influence from both of us because we are very different people.

Caring for country – Husband has always cared for country, I was like oh he's in the recycling again... he's always been the leader in it. Where he would normally take the lead, I'm taking a step up as well. I probably stepped into more of a sharing role of that where it used to be all my husband taking the forefront.

Its so worth it - You can get bogged down with client stuff, most the time its not clients stuff its noise that happens. Having this remind you of all the things you do and why you do it, it keeps you on track. Its very easy to not be on track with all the noise.

Guidance by nature - Nature is a healing gift and going back to nature to heal. I do know nature is magical, but I never gave time to really make time for nature and its healing properties. I think guiding people to go back to nature, even doing my own research for health. I want to hold onto to it, watch nature and be more aware of it. When you feel overwhelmed or disconnected by nature, connect back into nature.

Nature - Connecting back to nature, if we're talking about covid times, its something people can access. If essential workers had that in their backpack. Having faith in yourself and the universe and that it provides



Picture of Explore and Life Learner Backpack

The Beula Backpack

"Trying to follow the rules and fit a certain mould, be very straight up and down with what I was doing and follow all the rules because rules are important. Then I started to do things out of the box, things that hadn't been thought of before. Sort of like cheating within the rules to get things done...I started to come out of myself and just be who I was and that's why I've called it Beula. Its out of the mould, not the same as everybody else, not doing things the same way".

Edwardian/Victorian women –They are standing in a hovel. Both sides of my family... were very poor. In my mothers family and my husbands family there are these stories of families being split under really traumatic circumstances, involved with kids, and people not doing very well. It's women having to be strong, work things out as they go and very often work with the resources they can. The stories that I've heard, the people I've met and the different things that I have had to go through myself, in that backpack is a whole set of resources that innovate, work with what I've got. I didn't call them anything in particular, they are what they are.

Ladder – Use it to get to where want to or pull things down.

Clock, time - Just take the time, don't blunder in, don't rush. Just take the time to do things properly. But by the grace of God there goes I -. Reminds me that your attitude to what you're doing, whether it's in your work... community...family, I could be in that exact situation. It changes your mindset. It helps you instead of saying well there's not much I can do about that, you look it with different eyes.

Innovation - You take what you got and you change it into something that can be worked in another way or seen in another way. Sometimes if you're starting to do that other people will join in as well, it can be infectious.

Time out – You just gotta find something that you can absorb yourself into. In time out you just stop thinking or obsessing over things. Things will click into place.

Garden – I have a real garden where I grow vegetables and things, but the garden is where you grow yourself. Your family as well, its like an offshoot, my babies (two girls). Garden can grow anywhere its what you make it (concrete and bricks also in image).

Snake - Big snake, it doesn't matter how you are or how well things are going there will always be things that trip you up, whether it's a change in government policy... negative co-workers. It can be people you're supporting that can be very anti anything or have been in a difficult situation for so long they don't know how to look differently at things, how to hope I suppose.

Women – Growing into my own skin, being proud and confident in not trying to be like everybody else.

Swimming/Travelling- You can't always see where you are going, you have to be careful what's beneath you, where you are.

No - I wouldn't have put them on the paper. I was debating whether to put the snake there or not, because its to do with Christianity, that's not what everybody takes from that. I tried to think what would everybody take from that in their terms. That was challenging, trying to put down that your faith comes into it.

Picture (of me and my husband) - The family, experiences and my babies. I pretty much like all of it, the family are the most important.

Installation Art – I really think that's me, that's something I would do... what you see in the real image is distorted down the bottom. That's different ways of looking at things. When you start doing things different other people start joining in.

Family - Stories...the attitude and the things they have taught me. Those traumatic stories and the way they have reacted to it, the way they have gone through it. That's them carrying it by teaching me. Its very important, it gives you a sense of identity, gives you hope, insight into how people can be in those terrible circumstances, the perpetrators and the people who survive. It gives you an enormous amount of insight and pride. It also gives me resilience.

Husband – We support each other now with what we do going out to the community. He has a lot of wisdom, I have a lot of skills.

My Girls – As they are growing up they have a lot of wisdom... The people you surround yourself with, whether its family, work, support each other and find people you can have fun without being disrespectful in what you're doing. Find joy in what you are doing.

Swimming/Travelling – Just keep going...not giving up.

Installation art – Just keep looking at it in different ways... It shouldn't be what you want, you should be looking at what people are telling you. You're looking at it to suit that person. Sometimes we have grandiose ideas on what people can do and how far they can go, they just don't want that they want something simple.

Already in your backpack - You've just discovered what's in there. It made me think, well what else can I put in, education is one. I go to a lot of courses, a lot of cultural things with my husband, I didn't even think to put education in there and its extremely important, it should never stop.

Prick or prompt - I think when you do these sorts of things prick in your mind. Prick or prompt.

Empathy (owl) - The ability to listen to what the other person wants, rather than imposing. If you are family (essential worker) my husband is an elder and I am an aunty, we have to be very careful that we don't impose what we expect. We have to look at how can we encourage the person to grow, how can you educate without putting them down and making them feel little. Making sure you don't push up your own ego, unconsciously that can happen very easily. Owl on the shoulder with big eyes looking at me WHOO are you doing this for and because they are wise.



Picture of The Beula Backpack

The Shalom Backpack

"This idea of wholeness and completion... its about the holistic community and person. If someone's hungry, you try to get them food. If someone is sad, you try to help them deal with that to get them to a better place. Its not just what Christians think chaplaincy is about. Shalom is kind of that end goal of peace that Jesus is already".

Fragile (wine glasses) - I find I can be very fragile when it comes to criticism....I find getting criticism from someone that is a boss or isn't Christian, I feel like I failed.

Isolated (cliff face) - Sometimes in chaplaincy you can feel very isolated, especially with covid. A lot of the togetherness you get is from other chaplains, doing conferences and things like that. Everything got cancelled and put online. I guess I felt very isolated because I have a very different world view to everyone else which is tricky.

Being made in His image (people with different faces from different cultures, different places and walks of life) - Really important to me to remember that every person has intrinsic value and is made in His image.

Versatility - Versatile in the role, you never know what you're going to get when you go to work. Its not a normal nine to five sit down job. Your role is always changing, you don't know who you are going to be talking to, from term to term or year to year we could have a different principle, you could have a different depth in a relationship. It is always shifting and changing.

Fear, Faith, Purpose and Identity - I think they always clash up against each other.

Hurdle - Constant hurdles, I never feel like I'm fully comfortable in my job. Recently I feel different, I don't have tik tok or that constant noise, I'm really trying to switch off. If I do the dishes or drive I try to listen to scripture, its changing my perspective of my job a bit. I feel like this week I can't even remember what any of the hurdles, whereas maybe last week or the week before that would be the last thing on my mind.

Kids - I feel young people deserve to feel loved and valued as precious. Trying to instil that into kids, so that it prepares them for high school, so that when they are adults out in the working world starting families they have a sense of their values and purpose...probably the main thing that drives me.

Society (apartment block) - Chaplaincy isn't just about the kids its about the community the greater society. Looking at the greater picture.

Inside my brain, innovation and creativity - On one side I'm very much about details and the organisation, on the opposite side of the spectrum I'm very creative and a lot of things are logical and don't make sense. A representation of where my brain is at sometimes... I had to start a book where I write ideas down. Now when the principal asks about doing a group I can say, oh I have all of these ideas.

Deliberate what I put in my bag and what I put out of the bag - The outer are the bigger picture and the things on the inner are what drives me in my role or life.

Grace - When I found that I was like this is going on top (of backpack)...the epitome of everything, I only do my role because of the grace of Jesus. It doesn't feel like a normal job where you go in by your normal strength and power. I even wrote down this isn't my backpack, Jesus is holding the backpack and I'm flailing around while he takes me where he needs me to be...I'm inside the backpack.

Salt - Matthew 5:13. Salt's about preservation... ties into the idea of shalom...at school you see all this decay and families are broken apart and people are broken, so you are the salt and light in the school. God has given you that role in the school. That's another reason, like why do I worry or get anxious about things, I'm just there as an ambassador. Its not actually me doing the work, the salt is just trying to stop the decay. That's why I do things like breakfast club, food hampers for families or teaching girls about puberty, things I can help with, because of that the grace I have been shown.

My husband - I find coming home from work is really exciting because im going to see my husband. Weekend we get to hang out, watch tv and drink coffee, but I really feel refuelled by that. I really do feel like he helps carry some of these things. Even my confidence in my role, like if I feel like I failed he will be the one to remind me, remember when this happened. He is always my encourager.

My friend - She usually comes to me for advice, I feel like I go to her for self care, like I sit and paint with her. I feel like other chaplains too, knowing they are out there. Every time I hear their stories I am inspired or connected to that and alleviate my fears.

Shalom - That impacts how I have conversations with people. Grace...that's almost like a challenge, there are a lot of people that you deal with that you could judge them...like this kid, his parents wont get up in the morning to bring him to school, you get stuck in a place where you are like should I be angry about this, should I be gracious about this. I have had a conversation with a parent that was like that. Her son would stay up all night so he could wake her in the morning so she would take him to school. I got to meet her, I feel like this idea of grace allows me to have a conversation with her, be in someone else's shoes. Grace rubs up against young people deserve to be loved and precious and safe? Grace is how I see through the world what Christ has done, but I'm still human. I think chaplaincy has a lot of grey, I think we see a lot of black and white in the church. This is sin, this is bad this is wrong, then you get into working in a school... that's not how we work this out.

Faith - I think people appreciate speaking to someone with a faith. I found some teachers that felt everything was up in the air, they didn't know what was going to happen so that started asking where I went to church, they were having spiritual conversations with me. They said, I admire that you have this faith. Its like this thing that people want because it ties into a strong foundation of purpose. It might feel safer having that type of conversation, even if what they believe is not what you believe, they still respect the fact that you shared what you believed but you didn't trample all over my beliefs, that's really counter cultural. Connecting with everyone genuinely. I want to make sure I'm not absent in a conversation. I want them to know I genuinely care and that points to why I genuinely care.

Jesus - I feel like I'm gonna say a really Sunday school answer like Jesus. Let's go with Jesus, but what I mean by Jesus is that all people that are in a caring position are doing it out of an overflow of transforming love. Its changing people into being something they could never be by their own power. Getting the ability to care that is supernatural that we cant' do if we are merely humans.



Picture of The Shallom Backpack

The Gardener Backpack

"Life is seasonal, relationships, experiences, knowledge etc. Everything takes cultivation, weeding, pruning and environmental influences. It's also about sitting back to look and take it all in, see the fruits of labour, grieve or yearn for what was, and anticipate and be innovative to admire new or different".

Love your neighbour - Even with all my mistakes, flaws and needs, many people have reached out and seen me as worthy of receiving love, help, time, support, teaching etc. My beliefs tell me everyone, even the detestable are worthy of love and help, that doesn't make me a doormat or mean I agree with acts of injustice, it just means my beliefs constantly challenge any feelings and thoughts towards a person that may not be living life the way I wish they would. Similar to the narrative concept of externalising the problem from the person. It also means that the value of patience, compassion, grace and forgiveness are constantly at play.

Deep Breath - This is the immediate reaction followed by an internal prayer, followed by more deep breaths. All of the above then help me to think about what, when, where and how. It also stops me from feeling isolated in the crisis.

Toxic masculinity and doubt - I found myself in a position where there a number of men that did 'business' a certain way, and that made me constantly belittle my emotions as being reactive or too sensitive and not like the business men who knew how to get ahead. I was trying too hard to be something I am not, and it skewed my values on relationships with men in the workforce and the concept of defining workforce masculinity. This ties in with the removal of doubt. I mistook doubt as reflection. I do need to question the reasons and methods of what I do, but I don't need to punish myself with doubting my thoughtful considerations if things don't go to plan. I just need to learn from it.

Fun - Not social media worthy fun, but genuine fun that makes me laugh, smile and carefree. Having fun is a stimulant and boosts my wellbeing. It's been missing or dulled in the past year and it needs reigniting.

Family and People's stories - Sometimes these are one in the same, sometimes they reflect each other. They are precious, heavy, odd in shape and size and can protrude out of the backpack, jab you in the back and make your steps slower, but they are worth it, without them this would all be meaningless and I would be an island out of touch and out of reach.

Purpose - Remembering my purpose. When I do this I remember that I believe the Spirit is with me and that I am enabled because of him. The path might be a steep jagged uphill climb, but I'm always helped every step of the way and that the reason for doing this in the first place is because my purpose is to give hope and love.

Group Work – I feel like I am growing into my strengths more and more, and I realise that I enjoy and am good at facilitating group work. I want to explore this and expand my skills in developing, facilitating and engaging meaningful groupwork.

Evidence - Whether that is feedback, stories of wellbeing and impact or I can visually see the influence. I also have friends, family and other practitioners that give me genuine feedback and share ideas of practice.

Music, Nature and Bible - I enjoy listening to just about all genres, era's or cultures as inspiration. Music can be very uplifting, comforting, moving, a statement or provoking to express emotions. Nature is very encouraging to me because of how it makes me feel. Seasons, elements all of it, it helps my mind and I am often in delight, curiosity or wonder. My Bible, so much more than a book or rules, religion or old stories. It's nourishing, and constantly challenging and inspiring. It's relational and living.

Humour and Exploring - Humour is huge in my culture and upbringing. If you didn't know how to laugh at yourself then you were taking life too seriously. I like to spend time with people that are genuine and know how to laugh and make me laugh. Making me laugh means you enjoy my company in all circumstances and that it doesn't matter what's going on or how heavy it is, we will get through it, but in the meantime, lets laugh and make each other smile. Exploring, this doesn't mean big fancy travel holidays that can be posted on instagram, it means exploring in an observant manner so that I learn or appreciate something, someone or somewhere. Today I watched a blue tongued lizard in my backyard and took note of its personal path in the garden.

Scared to be out – I enjoy downtime at home, and get energised from times of quiet and solitude. However Covid has twisted that, it has become too easy for me to stay home. Before Covid once a fortnight my husband and I would choose a restaruant we had never been to and have dinner there, now I am scared of being out. I wish it was just because I am trying to stay healthy, but it's more, there is a discomfort being out of the house and unwilling effort required to do so. I don't like it but I need to figure out how to balance staying safe but being well.

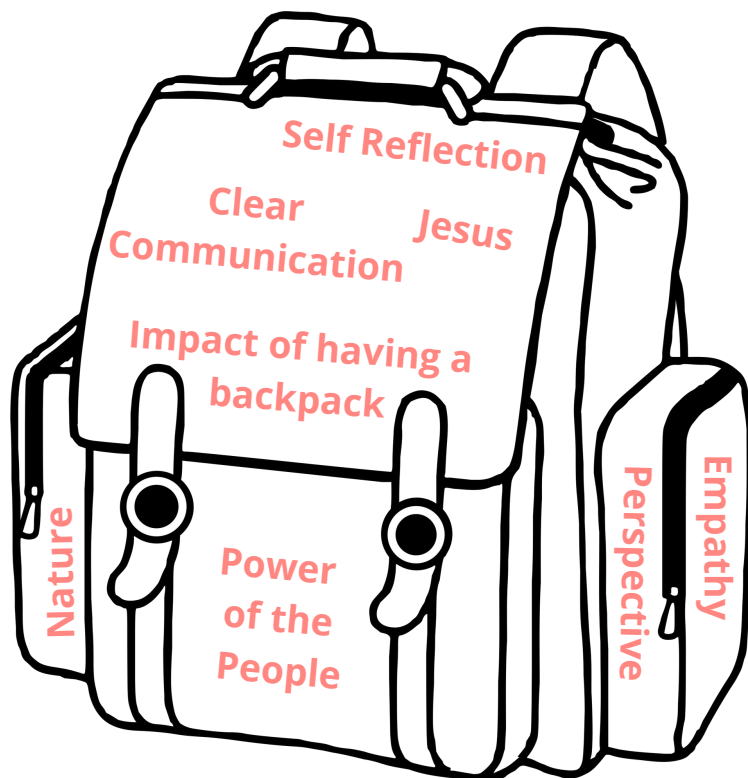
Yahweh and Experience - For me there is no better protection than Yahweh. He also gives me experiences so that I can use them to know what to do next time.

Yahweh - I have evidence from experiences that God is my hope and gives me hope. I also have wonderful people around me that inspire hope when I struggle to see it.



Picture of The Gardener Backpack

Collective Essential Worker Bigger Backpack



Pandemic Talk

A list of words or phrases that have meaning relevant to the experiences of the pandemic.

WFH-Work from home.

Keeping Green - To stay green or appear online on teams/skype. Majority of the time we weren't actually working.

Business up top, party downstairs - wearing appropriate clothing for work video calls from the waist up.

Donut Day - Where there have been no new recorded cases.

Great White Ear Tip - Covid test swab - Evokes feelings of oh my God, if it doesn't feel like it's been shoved up your brain then they haven't done it right.

My hands are getting more alcohol than I have had in the last 20 years - Using so much hand sanitiser.

Toilet Papergate - It's a low point for society.

That's 2020 - When somebody shares how bad things have been this would be the empathetic response to help make sense of the experience.

Aunty Rona - A way to describe Covid. Aunty Rona is like that aunty that nobody invited to the family gathering, is all up in your business but has nothing to contribute and won't leave.

Social Distancing - A term I'd not heard of before this pandemic. Its almost an oxymoron, because here is nothing social about distancing.

Work from home - Doing the best we can, doing as much work we can at home while there is a global pandemic happening.

Frontline worker - Health worker, the people working with the virus.

Essential worker - Essential workers are who the world, our society needs to function while all that other stuff is going on. Essential worker can also produce a sense of pride in contribution to society.

