SPELLS FOR FLARES



A Flare Kit Workbook for POTS, MCAS, hEDS, Dysautonomia, and Chronic Illness – from THE NERVOUS SYSTEM GRIMOIRE

Worksheets, Safety Planning, and Self-Care Strategies from a Clinical Herbalist

Spells for Flares: A Flare Rescue Kit Workbook from The Nervous System Grimoire
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Always consult a qualified healthcare provider before changing your treatment plan, starting new supplements or herbs, or making decisions about emergency care. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room immediately.

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A NOTE FROM RIVER

This flare kit is the same framework I use with every client at the start of our work together. It's one of my favorite chronic illness hacks, and designed to help you create safety, orient yourself, and know what to do on your worst days.

But a workbook–no matter how thorough–can't replace the nuanced, embodied care that happens in relationship. If you need more support, I'd be honored to work with you. If you find we aren't the best fit, that's ok. There are many guides along this path, and I encourage you to choose one. Because sometimes the journey is scary and hard, and the road is easier when you don't walk it alone.

In the meantime, take what resonates. Leave what doesn't. Trust your body. You know it better than anyone.

And know that as I hand tools to you over these pages, I'm also reaching across space-time to send my deep love and hope for your well-being. May you, me, and all chronically ill + disabled people have bright, livable futures.

In care + kinship,

River



FLARE KITS: THE BEST CHRONIC ILLNESS HACK

I build flare kits with every client at the beginning of our work together. It's one of the first things we do, and it's especially important for the folks I wrote the Grimoire for.

Flare plans create safety. Before we can untangle the complex knot of chronic illness, we need a safe path back to ground. Because I want you to be safe, the flare kit is our first step.

The flare kit framework I use with clients was inspired by Naomi and Jonathan at Synergism Restorative Therapies, whose POTS coaching changed my life. I've adapted it for the people I work with—adding herbal protocols, nervous system practices, and the land-based medicine that shapes my clinical approach.

Beyond Safety, Why the Flare Kit?

In my work with chronic illness, I haven't found 'cure' to be a helpful goal. It creates anxiety, demands, and expectations—none of which actually help someone feel good day-to-day. Cure can also slide into performance and wellness theater, especially for practitioners who stake their reputations on making bodies conform to an idea. It might look good on paper, but 'cure' leaves most of us out in the cold and without a seat at the table. It just doesn't stack up to a livable life.

What actually helps people feel better is the idea of "resonance": that place where your body makes sense to you, your symptoms feel predictable instead of chaotic, and you know how to move through a day well. As a clinical herbalist, I'm always thinking about how we move closer to resonance and deepen our experience of it. A solid flare kit is the foundation. It builds resonance. Mine is posted on my fridge.



So What is a Flare Kit?

Two things:

First, it's a written plan that's easy to enact on your worst days so that you know what to do when things go sideways. No guessing. It includes your most common symptoms and what relieves them, the safe spaces you retreat to, who can support you in what ways, how to prepare your spaces, and how to tend your mental health.

Second, it's your physical tools: a basket with salt, antihistamines, and emergency snacks next to your bed. The remedies that shift joint pain are kept within arm's reach.

I'll walk you through the written plan, but the physical setup is up to you.

So let's jump in.



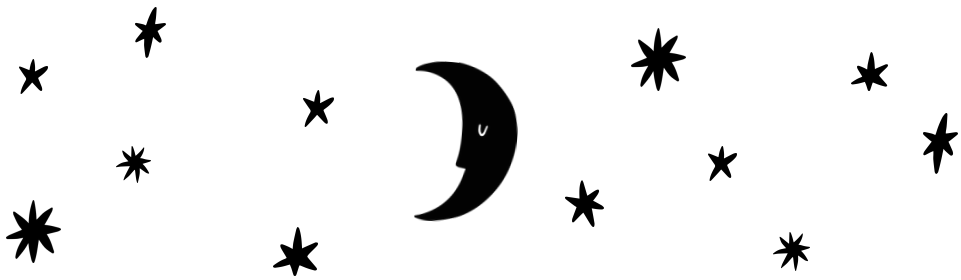
YOUR SYMPTOMS + WHAT HELPS

First, we'll list your symptoms and match them with what relieves them.

✶ For example, I have a lot of GI distress if I accidentally eat gluten (or even look longingly at a pastry. Sigh). So in my flare kit, I have this: Gluten contamination → Throat Coat or Mystic Mint tea, Enterovite, supplemental digestive enzymes (Gold Digest or Garden of Life for Women) for several weeks, DGL licorice tablets, plantain + calendula powder in applesauce. And for the love of all that is good, EAT ONLY SAFE FOODS.

✶ My most common dysautonomia symptom is a high heart rate (both resting and standing), so I have this on my flare kit: High heart rate → Vitassium + water OR Salt of the Earth. If that doesn't bring my heart rate down, rest with my legs propped against a wall. If it stays consistently high across several days despite everything, call the PCP for IV fluids.

This is a chronic illness choose-your-own adventure anchored in the tips and tricks that work best for your body. It doesn't have to be fancy, but it does need to be helpful at 2 am when you're in 10/10 pain, or when your heart rate is 160, and you can't think because you're trying to, you know, breathe.



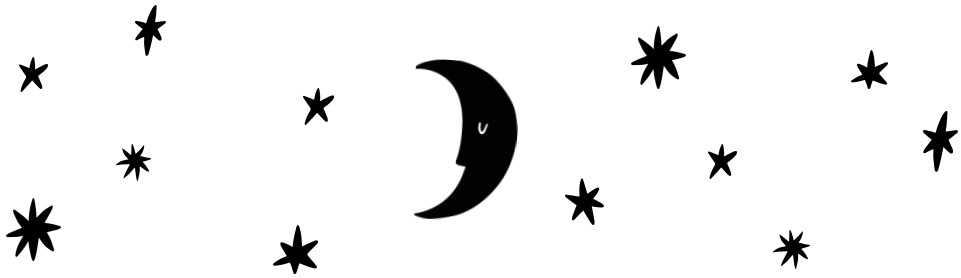
Use the space to work through your symptoms and list what you know meets them. The more detailed, the better. Write like you're giving instructions to a golden retriever so that your plan is actionable at 2 AM in 10/10 pain.



YOUR SAFE HARBORS

Next, we'll list your safe harbors. What do you retreat to–and where–when your body is a five-alarm fire? This is about creating a beautiful, livable life even through the hard flares.

For me, I want dark and quiet, with some of my favorite ambient music in the background. (I have a specific playlist for these days.) I usually don't want to talk. I retreat to a short list of safe foods, deep pressure, and creative flow-style projects that keep me busy without overstimulating me. (Paint, friends. I like to paint when I feel awful.)



Take some time to think about what safe harbors look like for you. Do you need a blanket fort? Dark + quiet? Easy-to-digest foods? (Are you secretly a vampire, like me?) Or do you long for sunshine, sugar, and your favorite people? Then write them down.



WHO'S ON YOUR CARE TEAM?

The next question you need to answer is: Who on my medical team can I reach out to? Who else? And how can they help? This might be an easy question with a quick answer. Or it may feel more loaded. It took me years to put together my care team.

Right now, it consists of:

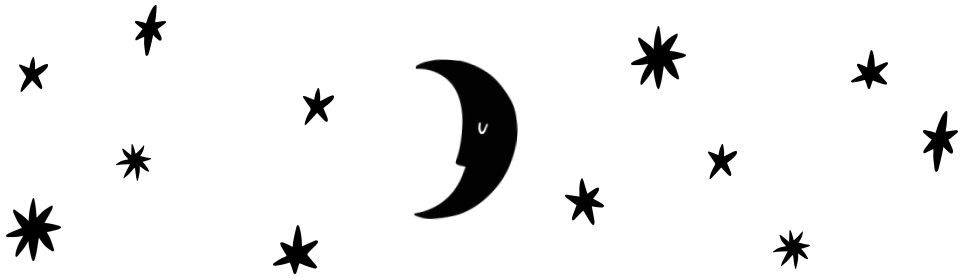
• My partner, who makes the majority of my meals and carries my things up the stairs to my office. He does most of the tasks that require standing or walking long distances, bless him.

• My PCP, a nurse practitioner who works on a direct care subscription model. If you've never heard of those and have the finances to swing it, I can't fangirl enough over direct care models. Or nurse practitioners. 5 stars, highly recommend.

• An acupuncturist and massage therapist I keep in my back pocket for painful flares. I have long-established relationships with both and trust them to catch me when I'm falling apart.

• A POTS coach. You heard a little bit about them in the book–Naomi and Jonathan from Synergism Restorative Therapies.

✷It helps to include their contact info + how someone can reach them for you in an emergency.



Now that you've heard about my care team, who is on yours? And how can they show up for you on the hard days? Write it down so that when you need it, you don't have to think. The safety net is just there. (Then rope your people into your schemes! It helps if everyone on your team knows the playbook.)



HOW CAN I PREPARE MY SPACES FOR FLARES?

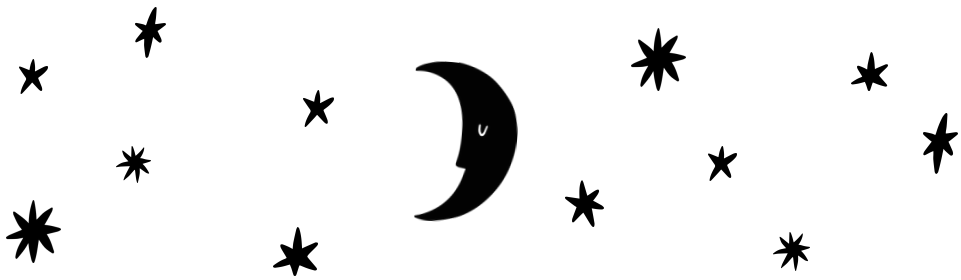
This takes some forethought, but I've found it to be an extremely useful question. I really wish I'd thought of it sooner because intentionally preparing your spaces for flares seems obvious to me now. I picked up this hack from my POTS coach.

Why Prepare Before a Flare?

A lot of chronically ill people I know and love try not to think about flares. They avoid them. Flares are monsters though, and they enjoy a good jump-scare. Preparing your space in advance is necessary work for most of us in our battle with them. The supplements that help me most when things go sideways are never easy to find in my small, rural mountain town. It's also difficult to snag things when your heart rate is going belly up, and your vision is getting darker by the second. So do it in advance. Then a flare isn't a crisis; it's just information. The result of something you did that didn't work. You can try again tomorrow.

What This Can Look Like

In my life, I answer this question with baskets. Lots of baskets. I have them everywhere I might sit down full of emergency supplements, non-perishable snacks, water, and something to keep me entertained until my body agrees that moving is a safe idea. I like to stash poetry books and journals with fancy pens in mine. (A basket wouldn't fit well in my car, so I bought a seat cover with special pockets.)



How will you prepare your spaces? What supplements or meds do you need? What kinds of safe, non-perishable foods? Where + how will you store them?

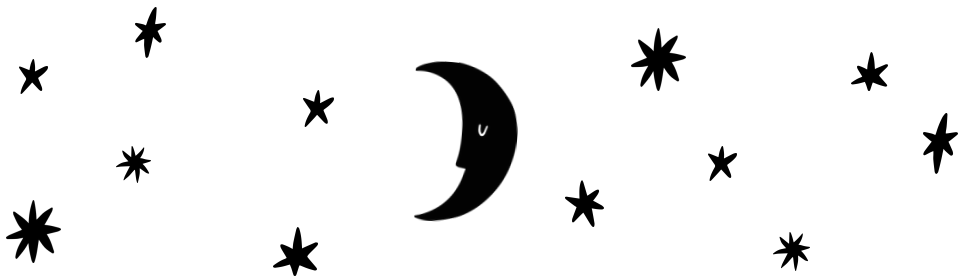


TENDING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH ON FLARE DAYS

Something they didn't teach me in herb school: flares can be traumatic. I've had flares that broke me. I've also had seasons that wore away at my mental health as I cycled from one flare to another, seemingly without cause. Days, weeks, and months that just ground away at me. By the time I realized flares were shaping my mental health, I was already feeling despair most days. Most of my energy was going into trying again when I needed to focus on healing. That taught me to pay closer attention to both my mental well-being and that of my clients.

So, what does tending your mental health look like in a flare?

For me, it's having a soft place to land. I need to make flare days the moments I step back from the rest of life and nourish myself. On days I need to spend in bed, I make sure I have fiction books and silly phone games on hand. I keep journals and pens nearby so I can jot down anything that's nagging at me, such as appointments I'm worried I'll forget or a quick note about something to grab from the store. If I'm mobile, we often take the day off, pack our things, and visit one of the many waterfalls or rivers that dot the Blue Ridge. I go out of my way to make flare days beautiful and good.



Each of us has a unique (often quirky) way of caring for our mental health. Whatever tending your mental health looks like on the hard days, write it down below.



WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL HELP

We're almost done, but before we cross the finish line, I want to mention one thing: you can ride out most flares at home, but some require medical intervention. Knowing the difference can save your life. I want to encourage you to work out what that line looks like with your care team.

Here's an example, though, of when I go to the ER or call 911:

- My heart rate is consistently above 180 (or stays above 150 even when lying down)
- I'm having chest pain, trouble breathing, or feel like I'm going to pass out
- I'm vomiting and can't keep anything down for more than 12 hours
- I'm severely dehydrated (dark urine, dizziness, confusion)
- I'm having a severe allergic reaction (throat closing, hives spreading rapidly, trouble breathing)
- Something feels wrong in a way I can't name—trust your gut

I call my PCP or go to urgent care if:

- My flare has lasted longer than usual, and nothing is helping
- I need IV fluids, but it's not an emergency
- I'm having new symptoms you haven't experienced before
- I'm feeling unsafe (mentally or physically) and need support

You're not "overreacting" if you ask for help. You know your body. If something feels off, it's worth checking.



DO THE THING

Ok. Now that you've had the opportunity to sit with all the moving pieces, it's time to pull your flare kit together into one place. The next page is pulled straight from my Root + Resilience Strategy–the living map I create with clients to orient them along their health journey. After we create their flare plan, I make sure they have copies to keep posted in helpful places, like the fridge. We also usually print copies for their partners or care team so everyone is on the same page.

FLARE
rescue kit

Some of your most common symptoms, and what helps them:

What safe spaces can I retreat back into?

Who on my medical team can I contact? Who else? And how can they support me?



How can I prepare my spaces for flares?

What does tending my mental health look like on flare days?

A NOTE TO YOU, AFTER THE FLARE

Welcome back, my friend! You made it through. Maybe it was three hours. Maybe it was three days or three weeks or three months. Maybe you're still not sure if it's really over or if you're just in the eye of the storm, waiting for the next wave. Either way: you're here. Reading this. Still breathing. Still trying. That counts.

I know what you might be thinking right now. That this flare means you failed, that you did something wrong. That if you were stronger, smarter, more disciplined, this flare wouldn't have happened. But here's the truth: flares aren't failure. They're information. Data that tells you something you did really doesn't work for you. And that's ok. Part of living life is falling down and getting back up again. It's good to know what wipes you out, and I want you to know that this gnarled knot isn't a moral one. You're not a bad person for having a flare.

This flare probably asked you to cancel. To say no. Maybe it asked you to let someone down. To choose your body over what the world wanted. And maybe you're carrying that weight. Maybe you're replaying the texts you sent, the apologies you made, the disappointment in someone's voice when you said you couldn't. I want you to know: choosing your body wasn't the wrong choice. It's the hardest, bravest choice there is. You didn't give up. You didn't quit. You listened. You rested. You made it through. That's the work.

Here's what I want you to remember as you come back:

✷ You don't have to rush. The world will still be there tomorrow. The to-do list will still be waiting. The people who love you will still be there. Give yourself time. Not because you're weak. Because you're wise. You

don't have to prove anything. Shush the voice in your head that says you should be doing more.

✷If this flare taught you anything, let it be this: asking for help is not weakness. It's survival. You're allowed to need people, to say, "I can't do this by myself." Friend, it took me an embarrassingly long time to figure this one out. I suffered for years on my own, needlessly, because I was so scared to be seen as sick and disabled. It turns out asking for help is just part of being authentic. The life I dreamed of was on the other side of that fear. I bet yours is, too.

I know you're tired. Tired of flares and managing and explaining. Tired of your body deciding what you can and can't do. I get tired, too. I know you're carrying more than anyone can see. And I know you're going to keep going anyway, because that's what you do when you live with a chronic illness. You rest when you have to. You rise when you can. You survive, again and again, even when it costs you.

So here's what I want to say to you, now that you're on the other side: You did it. Not perfectly. Maybe not gracefully, or even well, but you did it. You made it through the crash. And now you're here. Still breathing. Still trying. Still building a life in a body that asks more of you than most.

That's not small; that's everything. You're not alone in this. I'm here. Your body is here. And you're still standing. That's enough.

Feel better soon, friend. And know that I'm cheering for you.

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

You just built your Flare Rescue Kit–and that's HUGE. You now have a plan for your worst days. You know what helps, where to retreat, whom to call, and how to prepare your spaces. But if you're ready to go deeper–to map your nervous system, build personalized herbal protocols, and work with someone who actually gets what you're living with–I'd be honored to work with you.

The Flare Kit gives you the tools. Working together, we build the map.

Here's How We Can Work Together

📖 GRIMOIRE SESSION – From the Book to Your Body ($450-$600)
A 90-minute one-on-one session where we apply the protocols from The Nervous System Grimoire to YOUR body. We'll map your nervous system, identify the "spells" most relevant to you, and build a personalized 30-day action plan.

Best for: Grimoire readers who want personalized guidance without committing to ongoing support.

Follow the QR code below to find more info

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www.feralhollow.com/the-nervous-system-grimoire

🌿 ROOT + RESILIENCE – 3-Month Clinical Container ($1,500-$5,500)

Deep, sustained work for people navigating MCAS, POTS, hEDS, and complex chronic illness. We meet twice a month for 3 months. Together, we build your Root + Resilience Strategy Guide, a living document 20-30 pages long that maps your patterns, finds your best protocols, and builds resilience over time.

Best for: People ready to commit to the long game–real, embodied healing work.

Follow the QR code below to find out more about my work

💬 NOT SURE WHICH IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Let's talk on paper. Fill out my low-spoons alternative to the discovery call.

Same drill. Follow the QR code below to the form. You'll hear from me soon!

Or, Stay Connected

If you're not ready to work together yet (and that's totally okay), you can stay in touch by exploring my website or joining my newsletter at www.feralhollow.com. See you there?

