

# The Pressure Cooker

*Lonnee Rey*

“This stupid pressure canner is just in the way,” I mumbled. I should have rolled up my sleeves, but instead, held it at arm's length like it had cooties, relocating it for the fifth time - this time, I hid it under a blanket. Out of sight out of mind, right? It was a scary behemoth of a machine that I'd heard all sorts of nightmare stories about. HSSST! It was the canner, haunting me in my dreams.

I was like, “It’s gonna blow up on me. I will do it wrong, and the jars will explode inside.” I wondered why it did not come complete with safety goggles, that's how scared I was of it. It's amazing I ever became a chef, considering how afraid I am of lighting a gas stove or oven. I always got someone else to do it. The same thing happened in culinary school: an accident left me unable to taste a lot of food. I had to have another person season my sauces and soups. In spite of that, I was awarded the “Most Outstanding Freshman of the Year” scholarship. Further proof that, with determination, we can overcome a lot of things.

Where was my can-do attitude about the canner??

“Come on, get over it. You've been through worse things,” I thought. They say people most fear death and public speaking. As a child, I had a near-death experience, and I found that public speaking is easier than small talk at a party. These chart-topping fears aren't nearly as bad as we imagine them to be.

I'm sure we can all relate to something we should have faced sooner than later, and when we finally did, it turned out okay. As they say, everything you want is on the other side of fear. You probably hear this a lot, too: What is your ‘why’? Why are you motivated to do something? Let that motivation pull you through to the other side. There has to be some sort of reward, or avoidance of a negative outcome, to get you through it. I certainly had that in spades.

It all started when I ran into some alarming headlines on alternative news platforms. The terrible decimation of crops that are not going to come back, and the loss of nearly two thousand food processing plants, coincidentally all due to fire, led to my permanently raised eyebrow. What the heck was going on?? As far as food went, the writing was on the wall. It wasn't just some crazy preppers being hoarders of food for a pending Armageddon. This was real and it was happening right under our noses. The bigger alarm was that few people knew about this. With all the crazy things happening in our world, I wanted to make sure that at least one thing in my life would be secure.

I like to eat. I'm thinking, it's a good idea. I'm really not trying to fast. I know they recommend it, but I'm not really trying to do that right now, or in the future. The news I read was disturbing enough. It's hard to do anything when we are not at peace. What's also true is that we can think better when we're not hungry. We hear about inflation or other things like that lately. All of these things want to steal our peace. If you know it's going to rain, grab an umbrella.

“Don't be scared, be prepared,” was the motto of cooking and preparedness-oriented YouTubers. Well, that much made sense, especially after watching people panic-buying pallets of water and fighting over the last four-pack of toilet paper.

That pressure canner and I had been in a standoff for a year. What was another week? I researched YouTube channels for recipes and regulations on using a pressure canner. I found another way to procrastinate, writing a tongue-in-cheek email to Presto canner, suggesting they consider including safety glasses and a DVD coaching program to talk us ‘Chicken Little’ types down off the ledge. I imagined a soothing voice coaxing flocks of new canners back into the kitchen. *Cluck! Cluck!*

I must sound wildly disturbed to you at this point, but I'm okay with that...I hear it's endearing to see someone's authentic knee-quivering moments in life. How we doin'? Moving on...

In my research, I found a frequently used hashtag: #shtf. It means, (when) Shit Hits The Fan. Oh, OK. Wait, what are they talking about? Have you ever heard that before? It was a new term to me. I spoke to the computer screen as if it would answer, ‘Well, what are you guys actually expecting? Like, what does #shtf mean? Is it that bombs will be dropping and everything's fine till then?’ I wasn't really sure what to make of that bit, and the computer screen was silent.

I learned a #shtf moment wasn't a cataclysm. It wasn't Armageddon. All of us have #shtf moments in our lives. I began to see how it applied now in my life. I began to understand: you need to take care of this because prices aren't going down, and availability may change. I'd already seen how tentative the supply chain was when the local grocery store was out of navy beans and powdered milk for at least six months.

Then, a personal #shtf happened: A terrible fall that left me with a broken wrist and a sprained arm from fingertips to elbow. Overnight, I became a one-handed Wanda. As I write this, the leeks and potatoes I bought the day before the accident are still in the refrigerator, waiting to become soup. I can't peel or cut round vegetables. Try to butter a piece of toast with one hand. What a joke! I learned how to wedge jars with my hip against the counter, and use my good hand to open them. However, attempts to use a rubber band to hold the handle of my hand can opener resulted in tears of frustration and a phone call, “Hey, neighbor, would you please open this can of fruit cocktail for me?” A very thoughtful friend surprised me with the gift of an electric can opener. Normally that is a two-handed operation, as well. But, where there is a will, there's a way. Pushing the can opener against the wall as a brace, and after three or four attempts, it worked. If only it was so easy to brace, and butter, a slice of toast.

I thank God for the forethought of canning and the courage to embrace it...it has literally saved my can. I could not drive myself to the grocery store for six weeks following the accident. Thank goodness I had enough prepared so that even a one-handed Wanda could continue to have three squares a day.

This mantra, “I AM divinely guided, connected, and protected,” is something I wanted to share with you. It helps to remind yourself – to repeat it often – especially when uncertainty sets in. I think we are all divinely guided, connected, and protected, frankly. Divine guidance is like intuition, and I've never met a person who regretted following their intuition.

It works out really well when we listen to the still small voice inside; the one that nudges and guides us like an inner GPS. I call it “the BIG Yes.” By definition, “the BIG Yes” can look crazy to other people, defy logic to the casual observer and yet, it's still a good idea. You are the authority over your life. Who cares what other people think? What calls to you is for *you*.

I believe I was led to the news about food supply issues, so, I put on my big girl panties and apologized to the pressure canner for all the glaring looks. The year-long standoff had finally come to an end. I felt silly. What was I so worried about? Ohh yeah: I was listening to other people, giving them power over my actions. You see, the people who had good experiences were not the ones telling stories; it was the ones who didn't know what they were doing that got the most attention. Duly noted.

Like learning to ride a bicycle, then getting so good you did it with no hands, I got cocky with the whole canning thing. I experimented; started combining stuff that just didn't belong in a jar together. Not everything was a good idea, but the point is that what at first was so scary really wasn't so bad. I had wonderful tasting soups stocked up, and retired the canner, for now. It gives me peace of mind to know that it's there.

I've since learned that the Amish have been doing water bath canning, which does not involve a gigantic metal pressure canner, and their results are the same; have been for eons. Unfortunately, at first, I believed the hype that it was not okay to waterbath can most foods. Well, that didn't exactly turn out to be true. I wish I had known. I probably would have had a lot more inventory to fall back on in this current #shtf situation.

Prior to the accident, and with solid research tucked under my arm, I was excited to tell my neighbors the news. Surely, they wanted to have food security too, right? “Make sure you stock up for yourselves and your pets because this stuff isn't on the news. Don't be scared, be prepared,” I said.

Condescending smiles, ‘deer in the headlights’ looks, along with some very obvious and wide berths given since then, have shown me apathy on a whole new level. They simply do not care. Put the gun away, don't shoot the messenger! Everyone has opinions, but these are facts. The number of food processing plants being torched has only continued to grow in number, but I gave up trying to say anything to them.

There's a Zen expression, “it's not a gift unless the receiver wants it” which helps to keep in mind when your great idea, or intentions, are kicked to the curb. Maybe they don't want to take a look at it, I don't know. I would think you'd want to keep eating. Regardless, I just had to say to myself, “Ohhh, okay, it's like that, huh? OH, OK.”

The upside of their apathy is that it prompted a deep look into personality traits; an analysis as to who would, or would not “be there” if ever there came a future #shtf moment. I took mental notes on behavior and recognized some telltale signs that help when it comes to discerning who would be great to have in a foxhole, and who would not.

I use “OH, OK” a lot these days. It has become a habit; a quiet and handy response tactic to the insanity seen on the global stage. NO, it is not okay that we are faced with a statistical impossibility and ‘coincidental’ loss of our food manufacturing. Who is doing this? I have no idea. It doesn't matter. *Delete the need to understand*. Somebody is up to no good, and it's up to us to be prepared, not scared.

I saw people listening to sources and resources that really weren't that, ummm...informed. They were making decisions based on half the story. If you only hear half the story, what's the other half? I was doing my part to ring the proverbial triangle on the porch. I think it was an unwelcome noise. Cue shoulder shrug. All of these events and reactions from other people, including my own, have been teaching moments for sure.

As a result of these rattled awake moments, I ended up writing a book called “How to Deal with a Dumbass: what to do and say when they head your way.” It's like a field guide to potholes and the people who dig them. It is intentionally funny and authentic as the day is long because *yours truly* has been gullible, full of wishful thinking and misguided hope that if I looked hard enough, or stuck around long enough, the good would outweigh the bad. Not everybody qualifies for the foxhole, but God-knows I kept trying. There is a high price paid for wearing rose-colored glasses.

Discernment is practically a survival skill – and one we all need to make choices in our favor. It isn't selfish, it's essential. We live in crazy times. Who we surround ourselves with matters now more than ever. Ensuring that you have people who have your back in a pinch is of utmost importance.

### **Protect your peace at all costs.**

These rattled awake moments have become a mission to encourage sovereignty, and a movement fueled through collective passions to “Say it forward” via the Rattled Awake anthology series. The need for discernment, along with strategies to spot trouble *before* it becomes your problem, have become a book and hilarious podcast, *How to Deal with a Dumbass (a spiritual perspective)*. “Your contagious laugh always makes me feel better, Lonnee.”

A man in his late 50s wrote me a note to say that my Dumbass book helped him escape a dangerous cult in Norway. It feels good to know that something so simple as sharing embarrassing stories (‘cuz I have been a duhmy many times in life), is changing lives.

You never know what impact you will have, do you? Taking action is only way to move forward. What can you do to steady and ready yourself come what may?

One final thought:

**When you wear rose-colored glasses, you miss the red flags.** So, as hard as it is to take them off, it's worth it. You will be glad you did.

Go tell that mean old pressure canner in your life that it doesn't scare you anymore. Follow your “Big Yes.” You will be glad you did. When your #shtf moment comes and rattles you awake, you will already be prepared to get through it.

**Lonnee Rey** is on a mission to broadcast the voices of people whose stories will elevate, inspire and change our world for the better. She is a story development editor, concierge book producer, multi-show podcast host and authors' promotional messaging advisor. You can find "Life Lessons Learned from a Lousy Mother" and her "Dumbass" book on Amazon; her podcast is on Spotify.

If you would like to share your Rattled Awake moment, connect with her via [linkedin.com/in/lonnee/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lonnee/).