

I have a few things in the pocket of my work jeans that are transferred every time I change to a new set of barn clothes. There would be a pocket knife, but the last one I lost has not been replaced. There is always a black sharpie pen that has multiple uses—none of which is to make an unauthorized change in the proposed path of a hurricane. And, then, there are my worry stones.

I have had at least one worry stone in my pocket for years. For a long time, there was just one, a well-used flat, smooth stone that disappeared the same time I lost that last jackknife.

Lately, though, I have had three worry stones in my pocket. They are all well-used, but two of them are stones I grasp and rub between my fingers at most any slight annoyance or anxiety. One is a pretty, flat dark stone that is so regular in shape that it looks like it would make a fine brooch or pendant. The only feature of this stone that makes it less than perfect is its slightly rough surface. It never becomes totally smooth, even with a lot of use. The second minor worry stone is light gray, has a burnished patina, and looks like a tooth of some unknown animal.

But, then, there is the stone made for serious worrying. It is flat, oval, shiny, and very smooth. It wasn't always smooth, but it has had a lot of use. Although I know that a stone cannot solve any problems, it provides some measure of what—security? serenity? comfort? in times of anxiety.

Since our lives have been changed by the presence and spread of the novel coronavirus, my worry stone has gotten a good workout. Listening to the news, my hand reaches for the little stone. I know it will not cure anything, but holding the worry stone does something that is positive. And, if I lose it, well, there are always more where that came from. Or, I can promote one of the minor stones to a higher status.