It’s not been an easy summer. After a couple of years of drought, what is probably more or less normal seems like constant rain. I have a friend who has tried to come up from Boston a handful of times this summer. Her best-laid plan calls for nine holes of golf with my dad followed by dinner with me. She recently pointed out that rain has thwarted her plan not once but again and again and again. Along with broken golf dates, more than a few cookouts have been rained out. Not to mention poor little me, I’ve been drenched on several of my early morning walks.

However, lawns and gardens have never looked better. However, until it’s time to build an ark or our tourist economy goes to hell in a handbasket, all this rain falls under the category of small stuff. Most of the big stuff is happening outside of New Hampshire. However, our rarefied air and beautiful lakes and mountains don’t provide immunity from the gnarly stuff that happens elsewhere. We still feel the consequences.

So, what should we do when our values are assaulted and our overactive brains have been filled with angst and tragedy? I have a pretty simple idea. I don’t know if it will work, but here goes. Take a day, an hour or just a long pause to slow down and take a deep breath.

Take a deep breath and slide into an Adirondack chair. There is nothing like an Adirondack chair. Having spent at least three days scrubbing and re-staining mine, I deserve to sit. I’d like to add a good book and a very good cup of coffee. My hope is to stay put for an entire morning, only getting up for a fresh cup.

Take a deep breath and put your hand on your heart. My sister Brenda taught pre-school for years. Without fail every year, at least a child or two or three would be especially nervous about leaving mom every morning. Brenda’s advice was for everyone to hold their mother’s hand as they walked into school. When a little one began to feel anxious or sad, Brenda would prompt that boy or girl to remember holding mummy’s hand. Next, she would urge them to put their hand on their heart. Throughout your day, your week, your life, take hold of your loved ones’ hands. Reach out to your spouse, your mom, your dad, children, sister, brother, friends and cousins. Then, whenever you feel a little anxious or sad or just need some comfort, put your hand on your heart. It works.

Take a deep breath and smile. If you are like me, you have a knack for visiting the supermarket when the lines are longest. Whether its long lines or some other first world problem, there is nothing like smiling to change your perspective. After all, it’s only a supermarket line. Besides, the summer people won’t be here all that much longer. Before you know it, they’ll be headed home to the suburbs and big cities where the lines are always long.

Take a deep breath and sit by the lake at sunset. I want to take it all in; the changing colors of the lake and sky, the honking geese flying overhead and the loons swimming by. I want to embrace the tranquility and enjoy a quiet evening.

Take a deep breath and maybe, just maybe, the headache that’s been following me around for days will finally leave me alone.

Wishing you peace and bon appétit!
Zucchini Muffins

A zucchini muffin will be a welcome addition to that book and cup of coffee. Enjoy!

Makes about 2 dozen muffins

3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
2 large eggs
2/3 cup brown sugar
2/3 cup canola oil
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
3 cups grated fresh zucchini
1 cup chopped walnuts, toasted
1 cup raisins

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Line muffin pans with paper liners.

Put the flour, baking powder and soda, salt and spices in a bowl and whisk to combine. Set aside.

Put the eggs, brown sugar, oil and vanilla in a bowl and, with an electric mixer on medium speed, beat for 2 minutes. Reduce the mixer speed to low, slowly add the dry ingredients and beat until just combined. Using a rubber spatula, fold the zucchini, walnuts and raisins into the batter.

Fill the muffin cups about 3/4 full with batter. A 2-ounce ice cream scoop is perfect for standard size muffin cups.

Slide the muffin tins into the oven, bake at 375 degrees for about 5 minutes and then reduce the temperature to 350 degrees. Continue baking until the tops are golden and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, about 20 minutes more.

Serve warm or at room temperature.