



Spark 32

Packing Cubes and Power Moves

The real power move? Unpacking the beliefs that don't fit and making room for the ones that do. - Jerri Kemble

I was still in pigtails when the first items were folded into my metaphorical suitcase. They were neatly pressed garments of doctrine—crisp creeds, shiny certainties, and a perfectly paired set of “shoulds.” My grandmother, whose love smelled of cinnamon rolls and hymnals, tucked in one last reminder: *“Marry a good Lutheran boy, Jerri Jane. That’s your mission.”* At the time I thought every child’s bag looked exactly like mine.

But bags grow heavy when they’re packed by other people’s expectations.

When I reached adolescence, the zipper began to strain. I peered inside and discovered clothes that no longer fit my shape or my spirit. Some sleeves—stitched with judgment—pinched my arms when I reached out to people different from me. Certain shoes—polished with perfectionism—never let me dance. I began to realize that what I’d inherited were hand-me-down beliefs: convictions tailored for someone else’s journey, not mine.

Like every trip I take, I had over-packed for life because I wanted options. There are always outfits I never wear, and spontaneous ensembles I invent once I arrive. The same is true of the values and worldviews I hold. Some stay folded

forever, some get remixed into something bolder, and a few become beloved staples I'll never leave behind.

So I spread everything across the bed—literal clothes when I travel, and figurative ones when I grow—and asked three ruthless questions that now guide my *badass firefly* life:

1. What will I always carry?

My compassion cardigan that warms every room. The resilience jeans that survived grad school. Grandma's quilted kindness and love—timeless, roomy, irreplaceable.

2. What no longer serves me?

Guilt-stitched skirts that restrict movement. The fear scarf that hides my voice. Dogma blazers two sizes too small. I thank these items and then I donate them to the past.

3. What new pieces deserve space?

A curiosity jacket with endless pockets. Courageous heels that make me taller. A rainbow-colored tee that glows even in baggage claim. Room must be made—so out go the extras.

The Power of Packing Cubes

Here's my trick: packing cubes. On a flight, they tame clutter; in life, they categorize growth. One cube holds "Core Values"—non-negotiables like

integrity and empathy. Another is “Emerging Passions”—AI in education, women’s empowerment, watercolor doodles. A final cube is “Stretch Zones”—skills and perspectives that scare me a little but thrill me a lot. If a belief or habit doesn’t fit a cube, I know it’s dead weight.

From Suitcase to Sky

Fireflies don’t shine by lugging around the whole forest; they carry just enough fuel to light up the night. Your mission—our mission—is to travel brighter, and farther. Inspect every inherited item. Keep the ones that still spark joy or justice. Retire the ones that dim your glow. And always leave room for souvenirs from future adventures.

Because the destination isn’t a place. It’s the person we’re becoming.



