

Commentary...

Hope in the time of pandemic

By Mitchell Luftig
Columnist

Evolution designed our brains for maximum efficiency by automating as many tasks as possible. The brain stem oversees respiration, the contraction of our heart muscle, digestion, and so on. Located within the midbrain, the amygdala is tasked with monitoring our environment and alerting us to danger.

We also come equipped with an autopilot that enables us to automate routine tasks. Thanks to the autopilot, we can simultaneously wash dishes while dreaming about our next vacation or preparing for a new project. The autopilot also serves another critical role — it perceives and interprets information gleaned from the environment, presenting us with a comprehensible world.

The autopilot is so useful that it serves as the brain's default mode.

Although the autopilot offers efficiency, when we are running on autopilot, we lack a direct connection to our experience: we eat, but we don't taste our food; we hear words, but we don't listen in a way that leads to understanding; we look at the snow-capped peaks of Three Sisters, but there is no sense of wonder at their majesty. We pass through the world like a shadow, insubstantial, going through the motions, not fully alive.

The autopilot offers us no relief from the worry, fear, anxiety, depression, or despair brought on by the pandemic. The autopilot can't even conjure up its familiar, comforting routines. Clearly, we need to look elsewhere to find hope in the time of pandemic.

There was a time before the pandemic struck and there

will be a time when the pandemic has passed. The fear and confusion inspired by the pandemic that makes it so difficult to locate happiness in the present moment will not always reside with us.

There are three steps we can take right now to reduce our fear and despair, to find hope. We can learn how to savor the past — before the pandemic struck; savor the future — when the pandemic has departed; and savor the present moment.

Savoring the past. Visualization exercise. Recall your last trip to the Oregon coast. Can you remember the sounds of the ocean — the crashing of surf, the sound seawater makes as it moves up the beach, gliding over smooth stones? Can you feel the warmth of the sun on your back (or the coolness of the fog), the grainy feeling of the sand beneath your feet? Can you smell the salty tang of the ocean air? Do you see little shorebirds running around, trying to grab a meal with their long bills? Are there gulls circling overhead, riding the swells, or huddling together on the sand? Are there interesting formations out in the water?

Do you feel happy? How can you tell? Where inside your body do you feel happy? Is it a warmth, tingling, pulsing sensation, or something else? Take your time and really savor your experience, immerse yourself in your happiness.

Savoring the future (anticipatory savoring). Now I want you to imagine the trip you will take after the pandemic ends. Explore with your senses the sounds, sights, smells, tastes, and physical sensations. For example, if you are walking in a forest, do you see sunlight filtering through the canopy? Do you hear the

sounds of birds? Do the trees give off a fragrant scent? What does the bark feel like? What does your clothing feel like against your skin? Who is sharing this adventure with you? Is it a quiet experience, or is there conversation or laughter? How do you feel walking in the forest? Are you happy, playful, curious, or content, or do you feel something else? How does this feeling reveal itself in your body?

Savoring present moments. Walk, bike, or drive somewhere with a good view of the Three Sisters. Pretend that your eyes are a digital camera. Put your eyes in panorama mode and make a sweep across the landscape, taking in as many details as possible. Experience the majesty of these mountains. Imagine that, like the mountains, you too can weather any storm passing over.

Increase savoring by making outings memorable. Imagine you have found a quiet trail where you can hike with friends or family while maintaining social distance from others. When you reach a special viewpoint, turn to your companions and slap high fives. Jump up and down, spin in a circle, shout for joy. Mark this happy moment. (Please don't do this on the edge of a cliff!)

Savoring the past, future, and present helps us to recall the happy times before the pandemic, to expect happy days ahead, and, regardless of what is going on in our lives, we can savor the happiness always available to us in the present moment.

Savoring enables us to turn on the brain's direct experience network and idle the autopilot. When we immerse ourselves in our senses, we become fully alive, feel more solid, happier, and hopeful.

Something fishy going on here...



PHOTO PROVIDED

Artist April Wright chalked a remarkable piece of art on her sister Amy Bennette's driveway in Sisters. The piece was inspired Amy's daughter Aeryn's love of fish.

OUR DRINKING WATER QUALITY TOLLGATE WATER COMPANY 2019

Federal and state agencies require each community water system to provide an annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) to each customer. This is Tollgate Water Company's (TWC) 2019 report.

Where does my water come from?

TWC's water is derived from two wells, which pump from a ground water aquifer. One well is located at the east end of Wagon Wheel in section 5 and is well #2. Well #2 was drilled to a depth of 346 ft. in 1980. Static water level is the level of the water in the well when water is not being pumped. The 4/22/2019 static water level was 116 ft. The other well, well #1, is located just north of the fire substation. It was drilled to a depth of 220 ft. in 1972 and had a static water level of 129 ft. on 4/24/2019. The combined discharge volume into the distribution system from the two wells is around 1000 gallons per minute (gpm).

Source water assessment and its availability

The 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act require all states to conduct Source Water Assessments for public water systems within their boundaries. The assessments consist of (1) identification of the Drinking Water Protection Area, i.e., the area at the surface that is directly above that part of the aquifer that supplies water to our wells, (2) identification of the potential sources of pollution within the Drinking Water Protection Area, and (3) determination of the susceptibility or relative risk to the well water from those pollution sources. The purpose of the assessment is to provide water systems with the information needed to develop a strategy to protect the drinking water resource. The respective Drinking Water Programs of the Department of Human Services and Environmental Quality have completed the assessment for Tollgate's wells. A copy of the report is on file at the water system's office.

Why are there contaminants in drinking water?

Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive materials, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800-426-4791)

Is my water safe?

Last year, 2019, as in years past, your tap water met all U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and state drinking water health standards. TWC is proud to report that your system has not violated a maximum contamination level or any other water quality standard. Not all contaminants are tested annually. For those which are not tested annually, the most recent sampling results occurring in the last five years must be reported, if the contaminant was detected. TWC tests for more than 90 contaminants. The three contaminants listed in Table 1 are the only contaminants found in TWC's water in the last test cycle.

To help you understand terms and abbreviations found in Table One the following definitions are provided:

Parts per million (PPM) or Milligrams per liter (mg/l) — one part per million corresponds to one minute in two years or a single penny in \$10,000.

Maximum Contamination Level — the "Maximum Allowed" (MCL) is the highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

Maximum Contamination Level Goal — the "Goal" (MCLG) is the level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.

TABLE ONE

CONTAMINANT	VIOLATION YES NO	LEVEL DETECTED	UNIT MEASUREMENTS	MCLG	MCL	LIKELY SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION
Copper 6/26/2018	No	0.143	PPM	1.3	AL=1.3	Erosion of household plumbing, erosion of natural deposit.
Nitrate 6/13/2019 Well #1	No	0.340	PPM	10	10	Runoff from fertilizer use, leaking septic tanks, sewage, natural deposit erosion
Nitrate 6/13/2019 Well #2	No	0.190	PPM	10	10	Runoff from fertilizer use, leaking septic tanks, sewage, natural deposit erosion

MCLs are set at very stringent levels. To understand the possible health effects described for many regulated constituents, a person would have to drink two liters of water every day at the MCL level for a lifetime to have a one-in-a-million chance of having the described health effect.

Health effects

Copper is an essential nutrient, but some people who drink water containing copper in excess of the action level over a relatively short amount of time could experience gastrointestinal distress. Some people who drink water containing copper in excess of the action level over many years could suffer liver or kidney damage. People with Wilson's disease should consult their personal doctor.

Nitrate in drinking water at levels above 10 ppm is a health risk for infants of less than six months of age. High nitrate levels in drinking water can cause blue baby syndrome. Nitrate levels may rise quickly for short periods of time because of rainfall or agricultural activity. If you are caring for an infant and have concerns, you should ask advice from your health provider. TWC's greatest nitrate concentration is less than 3.4% of the MCL.

Do I need to take special precautions?

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immunocompromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/Aids or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. EPA/Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Water Drinking Hotline (800-426-4791).

How can I get involved?

Your continued cooperation in such programs as the cross connection program helps insure the quality of our water. If you have questions about the water system or the quality of your water, call Lynn Lounsbury at 541-419-9593, or attend water board meetings, which are held the fourth Tuesday of January, April, July, and October in the Tollgate Recreation Hall at 7:00 p.m.

Rick Trambly
Board Chairman
Lynn Lounsbury
Water Manager

CHECK OUT THIS WEEK'S NUGGET INSERT!

Ray's Food Place

CINCO DE MAYO

Mission Brown Bag Tortilla Chips, 20 oz. \$2.99 selected

Umpqua or Eberhard's Sour Cream, 16 oz. \$1.99 selected

Baja Café Salsa, 24 oz. 2 for \$5, selected

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