

From the Heart. . .

. . . Lifeskills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Wellness . . .How's your well water?

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 1, 2011)

In all things in life, there is nothing more basic than having water nearby to sustain body and soul. "Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all." These are the basics Nelson Mandela sees as the right and requirement for all humanity. When available water begins to diminish or is nonexistent, we truly order our priorities even more than the scarceness of money in the bank. Now that is a reality check for us all.

We who live in the Texas Hill Country and experiencing one of the worst droughts in Texas history are being challenged to respect, preserve, and conserve our water resources. This challenge is more evident in counties where water wells are not replenishing as much from our underground springs and aquifers as in the past.

From 1893 to 2011, the Cow Creek Groundwater Conservation District reports the average rainfall is 33.81 inches. As of May 31, rainfall is at 3.71 inches. The lowest annual rainfall last reported was in 1954 at 10.29 inches. At Cow Creek's June 13th, 2011 Board Meeting, the Board of Directors moved from Drought Stage 4, Severe Drought to Drought Stage 5, Extreme Drought. **Stage 5 Requirements include:**

- Water reduction for permitted users (PWS, irrigation, commercial and non-exempt wells) – Mandatory 40% reduction in groundwater use or as specified in the operating permit.

- The conservation practices from Stage 4 shall remain in effect and mandatory in addition to the following.
- Irrigation of lawns and landscaped areas is limited to one day a week and shall be by means of hand-held hoses or hand-held buckets only. **No hose-end sprinklers or automatic sprinklers are allowed at any time.** Day of the Week Address ends with #--Monday 0 or 1, Tuesday 2 or 3, Wednesday 4 or 5, Thursday 6 or 7, Friday 8 or 9
- **No lawn and landscape irrigation shall be performed between the hours of 10:00 A.M. and 8:00 P.M.** No watering on weekends is allowed.
- Use of water from hydrants shall be limited to fire fighting, related activities, or other activities necessary to maintain public health, safety, and welfare.
- Use of groundwater for construction activities is prohibited, unless authorized by an operating permit.
- The irrigation of a domestic or home garden with groundwater shall be limited to an area of 5,000 square feet and shall be by means of drip irrigation, hand-held hoses with a positive shut off device or hand-held buckets only.
- Leak-proof troughs shall be used to provide water for livestock.

As you can imagine, many home landscaping care routines have drastically changed. One saving grace are homes who have native plants able to survive more on their own than introduced varieties.

The EPA offers some general information about proper well construction and continued maintenance that are keys to the safety of your water supply. You can visit your state water-well contractor licensing agency, local health department, or local

water system professionals and installers who can provide information on well construction and how to handle rainwater flows, contamination risks, and well maintenance for your health and wellbeing. Make sure your ground water contractor is registered or licensed in your state, if required. If your state does not have a licensing/registration program contact the National Ground Water Association.

EPA states, “Many homeowners tend to forget the value of good maintenance until problems reach crisis levels. That can be expensive. It’s better to maintain your well, find problems early, and correct them to protect your well’s performance [and your health]. Keep up-to-date records of well installation and repairs plus pumping and water tests. Such records can help spot changes and possible problems with your water system. If you have problems, ask a local expert to check your well construction and maintenance records. He or she can see if your system is okay or needs work.”

In addition, EPA advises us to be careful about storage and disposal of household and lawn care chemicals and wastes, and minimize the use of fertilizers and pesticides. Be sure to take steps to reduce erosion, prevent surface water runoff, and wastes from livestock, pets, and wildlife.

Here are key factors or concerns Cow Creek offers residents of the Texas Hill Country (having city water, water wells, and rainwater harvesting systems) to be aware of for their own health and conservation of water at home and workplace.

1. Quantity/availability during drought times
2. Sustainability
3. Water quality
4. Regional growth patterns

According to Don Dietzmann, Cow Creek Treasurer, "these key factors are of paramount importance to entities that provide services," such as Cow Creek and utilities. The first two focus on usage by the individual homeowner and water well user. Usage is directly tied to the everyday habits of the homeowner. Often, we turn on the water faucet and expect to get clean water to drink and to use as much as we want. Making daily changes in the use of our resources is not always an easy task—particularly as they challenge our comfort zone right in our own homes and lifestyle.

With limited resources, Don encourages us all to modify our usage and become better stewards of those resources in both abundance and scarcity. Don believes "generational education" is vitally needed to encourage good stewardship, design a sustainable growth plan, and then manage it well. He considers rainwater harvesting systems a great alternative or solution for homeowners now and in the future. This is particularly important as our estimated area population may double within the next ten years. As homeowners, we all will then be helping ourselves have "well-ness" for the long term. We will also be helping our service providers maintain quantity/availability during drought times, sustainability, water quality, and reliable water resources that support regional growth patterns.

To become an informed resident for the wellbeing of your family and community, here are some website links to check out. During the heat of the summer, help keep the water flowing and stay well with clean water for body and soul.

General Information:

EPA, Private Drinking Water Wells, <http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/well/index.cfm>,
http://epa.gov/safewater/privatewells/pdfs/household_wells.pdf,
<http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/well/whereyoulive.cfm>

EPA Water Consumer Information, <http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/index.cfm>

CDC Private Ground Water Wells,
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/private/wells/>

Keeping Your Drinking Water Safe,
http://homebuying.about.com/cs/privatewells/a/safe_water.htm

Information Specific to Texas Hill Country:

Cow Creek Groundwater Conservation District, <http://www.ccgcd.org/>,
http://www.ccgcd.org/Public%20Notice/CCGCD_PressRelease_06152011.pdf,

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Wellness . . . a “weighty” topic

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 8, 2011)

“Now there are more overweight people in America than average-weight people. So overweight people are now average. Which means you’ve met your New Year’s resolution.” One can never pass up a Jay Leno zinger. It’s always good to have a laugh about ourselves and that “weighty” topic. Yet, it’s not very funny for the 36.6% of Americans who are overweight and 26.5% who are obese (CDC, 2009).

The 2008 medical care costs alone of obesity in the United States are staggering at \$147 billion. Every year that passes, more states are being added to the overweight and obesity roster. Check out CDC’s link for animated trends for 1985 to 2009, <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/trends.html>.

When I get on the scale and I see another pound or two creeping up, I ask myself, particularly as a wellness coach, “Why did I have that extra scoop of ice cream last night?” No matter how disciplined I may be in a number of areas in my life, I too slip up when it comes to the sweet tooth. Through the many years recovering my health and life, wellness and weight were at the center of my travels.

According to the CDC, “obesity is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or greater. BMI is calculated from a person’s weight and height and provides a reasonable indicator of body fatness and weight categories that may lead to health problems.

Obesity is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, certain types of cancer, and type 2 diabetes.” In my younger years I had a long list of pre-diagnoses, including hypoglycemia to prediabetic swing and family cardio risk, etc. that definitely got my attention. And I was only 36 years old then. Fast forward to my young at heart more senior years, I continue to map my journey to keep my weight in the healthy range. Fortunately, it’s easier to say no to those treats when that small, still voice says, “Remember when? You don’t want to go back there do you?” On the positive side, that still voice also tells me, “Look at how far you have come and are in the winning circle in your life. Let’s keep moving forward.”

As a life/wellness coach, my clients never cease to amaze me at their own courage and commitment to their goals and overcoming challenges. They continually remind me of the lessons I learned along the way and the need for a refresher periodically. So, I offer here a few gems that have kept me moving forward from the early 1980s to today. May they bring you renewed hope and commitment to your own wellness travels and “weighty” challenges.

1. I shared the journey with my family, and it made all the difference in keeping me on track and motivated.
2. I sought wellness providers who became my advocates and friends along the way. We journeyed as fellow students of life and wellness options personally tailored to me.
3. I learned that I could give up to gain. So, as I gave up some unhealthy choices, at the same time, I chose something healthy and uplifting for the body and soul. The

incredible variety of available healthy, enjoyable foods was a delightful journey of discovery for me.

4. I bought some great cookbooks and learned that it was fun and creative to cook and bake healthy. I even ground my own grain and baked my own breads. What a fragrant treat that was. I even found snack and cookie recipes I grew to love that became a natural part of my daily calories.
5. My husband started a vegetable garden that introduced me to a whole new world of taste never found in the grocery store produce. I grew to love my veggies!
6. As my new healthy lifestyle became natural to my everyday life, I could fudge a little and again. But made sure I always kept my wellness routine every day intact.
7. I shared the journey with a few friends to help us all stay accountable to our goals and commitments while having some fun along the way.

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The World of Wellness

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What do you see as your World of Wellness? Is it just your family physician, dentist, pharmacist, physical therapist? Or are you familiar with the three worlds of wellness all wrapped up together? Before I mention what they are, we all know the word, Wellness, means many things to many people. Yet, more than any time in our history, the opportunity to seek, reach, achieve, and sustain wellness is right before us.

Those three worlds are Conventional/Allopathic Medicine, Complementary/Alternative Medicine, and Integrative Medicine. Why three worlds and not one yet? The reason is obvious to any patient who visits their family physician for their annual physical or when trying to get help curing the common cold, at least for the moment. Although progress is being made, these worlds still seem to be battling each other; or at least, they are trying to engage in friendly competition and conversation. In the meantime, we patients are the ones who must seek advocates ourselves in these three worlds of wellness, while our healthcare system catches up.

For the past 150 years, just like rival siblings, both conventional and complementary/alternative medicine have been on a journey together. For the past 30 years, pioneers in our nation's integrative & wellness movement have paved the way for us all. Five years ago, in a book called *The Wellness Revolution*, economist Paul Zane

Pilzer outlined an emerging \$200 billion wellness industry. Today, as fully explained in his new updated book, *The New Wellness Revolution*, this industry has grown to \$500 billion, and it's just getting started.

Why, you may ask? How has this come about when we are being told today our healthcare system is on the verge of collapse or at best, a major crisis with healthcare costs? The answer—Wellness is much more than clinical therapeutics, curative crisis medicine, and insurance coverage. Although there are so many definitions offered within our nation's healthcare/wellness world, here is what I consider to be the best definition of wellness offered by Michael Arloski, PhD, a fellow wellness coach who wrote one of our nation's top coach's reference on helping client make permanent lifestyle changes, *Wellness Coaching for Lasting Lifestyle Change*:

“Wellness is a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential. Wellness is multi-dimensional and holistic (encompassing such factors as lifestyle, mental, and spiritual wellbeing and the environment). Wellness is positive and affirming.”

As you read this definition, ask yourself these questions and give yourself some “wellness” time to answer and write them down. First, What wellness goals do you have to achieve your full potential? What multi-dimensional & wholistic healthcare and wellness providers do you have on your team? As you review your wellness goals, how have you set those goals, short-term (3-6 months) and long-term (1 year to a lifetime)? Once you have your answers written down, have a family conversation to establish goals for the whole family. You will find the journey will offer encouragement, support, and accountability for each other.

Our full potential for wellness is never achieved alone. As John W. Travis, MD, shares with us in his *Wellness Workbook*, wellness is a choice.... a decision you make to move toward optimal health. Wellness is a way of life...a lifestyle you design to achieve your highest potential for well-being. Wellness is a process...a developing awareness that there is no end point, but that health and happiness are possible in each moment, here and how.

Wellness is a balanced channeling of energy...energy received from the environment, transformed within you, and returned to affect the world around you. Wellness is the integration of the body, mind, and spirit.... the appreciation that everything you do, and think, and feel, and believe has an impact on your state of health. Wellness is the loving acceptance of yourself.

I then offer that the center of all wellness is Relationships! Illness starts with “I,” but Wellness starts with “WE.” Take advantage of the gift of relationships you have for your health and lasting wellbeing.

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Wellness—oh the stress of it!

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“I get plenty of exercise jumping to conclusions, pushing my luck, and dodging deadlines.” The unknown author of this phrase clearly illustrates how many of us dodge making wellness a natural and positive part of our lives. How often have you heard yourself or someone else say, “I’ve tried losing weight and nothing works.”

How about “My wife used to be so slender and beautiful. She’s got to do something about it.” Now that’s pushing your luck with your spouse! And does this sound familiar? “I’ll start the exercise program next month. I’m just too busy.”

Even if we think that jumping, pushing, and dodging feels good for the moment, the stress of the consequences eventually hits us. Where does your predominant stress come from? How about a short stress status here? Which statement below represents your current stress management level?

1. I am under stress most of the time but do not intend to seek ways to alleviate it at this time. Although I do not have the support I need and have a difficult time with change, dealing with conflict, and physically relaxing, I do not intend to find ways to solve it any time soon. I feel I need to do everything myself; so saying “no” or delegating doesn’t happen for me.
2. I am under stress most of the time but am thinking about seeking ways to alleviate the stress within the next six months. I am also thinking about ways to get the support I need, more easily deal with change, conflict, and physically relax. I know I also need to find a ways to have more control in my life and learn how to say “no” more often.

3. I know I am under stress most of the time and intend to seek ways to alleviate stress within the next thirty days. I have researched and chosen one specific area at this time to get the support I need, and more easily deal with change as well as conflict. I will then focus this week on learning how to physically relax, say “no” more easily, and have more balance in my life.
4. I now have less stress in my life but need to continue to find specific ways to gain more support and more easily deal with change and conflict. I have set up a daily and weekly routine to help myself physically relax, say “no” more easily, and have more balance in my life.
5. I now have much less stress in my life and have the support I need as well as enough physical relaxation. I deal well with conflict and am able to quiet my thoughts. I also have effective ways of dealing with change. I delegate and say “no” easily. I feel balanced in all areas of my life.

I found myself somewhere between #3 and #4 these recent days. And it surprised me.

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Roman Emperor from 121-180 AD, was quoted saying, “If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself but to your own estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment.” I found myself needing to spend some quality time seeing how I handle my stress, no matter its origin, after scoring myself and reading this. Do I really have the power to revoke, if not the stress, my own estimate of it?

As my coaching colleague and friend, Carolyn, teaches, we always have a choice, even when we don’t seem to have control over the circumstance. In all of life, there is Reality. Then there is Truth to see possibilities in spite of that reality. Then comes Opposition from within or somewhere out there. Then comes Choice—to see and embrace that life just may not be as bad as it feels or I estimate the problem or challenge to be.

I then remembered that the character for crisis in Chinese means both "peril" and "opportunity." So, today I choose “opportunity.” to see whatever challenge and stress

that accompanies the circumstance as an opportunity for higher wellness in my life. I hope you do too.

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Wellness—Eat, Drink, & Be Merry

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When putting on a party, the invitation often says come “Eat, drink, and be merry.” But, of course, we leave out the last part of the phrase, “for tomorrow we die.” What a damper on the party that would be! Yet, how do we understand and balance the merry with the “morrow” and still be healthy and have a good time?

Many have been curious where the phrase or at least part of it even came from. Some say Shakespeare; even Erma Bombeck, or Lewis C. Henry who may have given us another version. “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we diet.” This one is definitely less morbid but still not having a good time, right?

Well, the original phrase was actually derived from a bible verse or two. The first possible was Isaiah 22:13 (NKJV). “But instead, joy and gladness, Slaying oxen and killing sheep, Eating meat and drinking wine: ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!’” Another comes from Ecclesiastes 8:15 (NKJV). “So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor *all* the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.”

Well, where is the good times in these verses as well? Maybe we need to look a little closer to the meaning behind the message. I bet you already know the punch line.

Here it is . . . *Wellness in eating, drinking, and being merry comes with moderation in all things.* Yes, there's that word, moderation. You may ask, "How can anyone have a good time at a party or anytime when moderation puts the brakes on?" Just remember how you felt in the morning when you ignored moderation in eating, drinking, or even in being merry when it took you over the edge to the ridiculous and dangerous.

Moderation can actually increase your merry over the long-term. For tomorrow, the next week, the next year, you can wake up sober, sane, and steady for each new day. Life then is celebrated with purpose in support of your values which sustains you through any challenge and opportunity coming your way.

I recently read a great article from Rosabeth Moss Kanter, professor, Harvard Business School, and the author of *Confidence and SuperCorp*. She offered five tips for managing under uncertainty and the challenges of our time. I believe they apply quite nicely to achieving wellness while we eat, drink, and be merry in moderation throughout our lives. What are the parallels? See the parallels bracketed in all caps after each tip.

Provide certainty of process. Even if we can't tell people what the outcome will be, we can provide clarity about when information will be provided...To have some things that the community or family does together regularly, no matter what, increases the ability to get on with the action even if situations aren't yet fully resolved. [STATE YOUR VALUES AND PURPOSE, SEEK CLARITY, AND TAKE YOUR FIRST ACTION IN YOUR WELLNESS PROCESS.]

Tackle maintenance and repair. Uncertain times, when some things are on hold, provide a good opportunity for fix-ups and clean-ups. Uncertainty makes it tempting to let things deteriorate (maybe we won't keep this office going or live in this

place any longer). But fixing things that can be improved represents productive action. For example, for job-seekers, embarking on a fitness regiment can add energy, lift spirits, and potentially make the person more attractive to a potential employer. [BEGIN WITH WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW THAT WILL ENCOURAGE YOU TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD IN SUPPORT OF YOUR VALUES AND PURPOSE FOR WELLNESS.]

Let ideas flow. Opening the brainstorming faucet washes away some uncertainty. Since uncertainty leads to rampant gossip and speculation anyway, it can be a good time to harness imagination toward productive ends. . . Brainstorming about possible futures stimulates imagination about what to do under nearly any circumstance. . . Seeds of innovation could sprout. [IMAGINE WHAT YOU WANT YOUR WELLNESS FUTURE TO BE AND BRAINSTORM WITH OTHERS WHO ARE ON THE SAME JOURNEY.]

Mobilize appreciation for key constituencies. Showing appreciation to valued customers is the business equivalent of gathering loved ones to reminisce about wonderful times together. Thanking customers for their loyalty or appreciating suppliers for their contributions doesn't involve making promises, but it does make friends. . . That can pay off regardless of changing directions. [RECOGNIZE & APPRECIATE THOSE AROUND YOU WHO UNDERSTAND AND SUPPORT YOUR VALUES AND PURPOSE TOWARD WELLNESS. IT WILL MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE NO MATTER THE DIRECTION YOU TAKE.]

Use purpose and values to "think beyond." Emphasizing who we are and what we stand for reminds people of the long-term, of the march of history beyond

today's uncertainty. It provides grounding. It helps focus on the times ahead, not just today's troubles. It helps people remain connected to one another. Clouds eventually give way to clarity. What separates the best from the rest is whether leaders communicate, improve, engage, invest in relationships, and remain true to principles. This can make the difference in getting stuck or emerging triumphant. [USE YOUR VALUES AND PURPOSE TO THINK BEYOND YOUR CURRENT CONDITION TO REMIND YOURSELF AND OTHERS OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE WHEN YOU ARE FOCUSED AND MOVING AHEAD, YET GROUNDED. YOU THEN COMMUNICATE, IMPROVE, ENGAGE, INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS, AND REMAIN TRUE TO YOUR WELLNESS PRINCIPLES ALL THE WAY.]

To read Kanter's entire article, visit <http://blogs.hbr.org/kanter/2011/07/five-tips-for-coping-with-uncertainty.html>. Enjoy your next party as you eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you will live well!—the Wellness Way.

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