

## A Sermon on the Trauma of Drowning

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for January 29th, 2023 (and beyond)

Today's sermon is personal to me. I nearly drowned as an infant and later at age 11. The first was a result of irresponsible caregivers and too much horseplay with a baby in a swimming pool and the second was intentional and I was held under water in a lake for an extended period of time by a slightly older "mean girl". After that, drinking water is a trauma trigger for me. But, it is instinctual and muscle/body memory recognizing water as a threat when entering the nose or mouth. I stop breathing and my throat tries to close whenever I drink water. I have to start water with small sips and gradually take larger sips rather than gulp even when very thirsty and needing to hydrate. This is one reason I prefer carbonated beverages because the texture is different enough that my body doesn't react to it as a threat. Some reference the trauma as another basis for risk aversion. "In contrast to these findings, females and those with poor self-estimated swimming competence have been found to have a heightened sense of the risk of drowning and thus a greater tendency towards risk aversion." Source: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1372&context=ijare> Nearly drowning or any other near death experience is traumatic. Those who survive drowning or experience near drowning like myself suffer traumatic stress from that. Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1119273/> And, everyone handles it differently. I tend to choose carbonated beverages because my body is more welcoming and doesn't stiffen up or reject it as a way to hydrate. But, I know the benefits of drinking water and still do that while mitigating my body's response by taking the measures stated of drinking water very slowly.

I've experienced so many different serious traumas including rape, drowning, and being hit by a double-decker fully loaded car carrier, that I must mitigate and manage all of them where the triggers are varied and very regular. I still enjoy swimming, but stay away from full submersion underwater and am a good swimmer so not worried about drowning as a result of any lack of competence in that regard. But, drinking water or any ingestion or potential inhaling of water still results in what some call a visceral or instinctual traumatic response. It has been so many years, one would think my body would be adjusted to drinking more water now without the throat closing and sometimes coughing or choking response if I take too big a sip too soon. But, my body remembers even if my mind is over it. So, I manage it all to the best of my ability.

If you live with traumatic stress of any kind and specifically that from a near drowning, I hope this helps and that if you prefer carbonated beverages after nearly drowning too, you are not alone. But, take small sips and try to still get at least 32 ounces a day of water or eat more fruit because fruit is full of water too. That's what I do and it helps.

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <https://www.heal-online.org>