



Perhaps the truth depends on a walk around the lake

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We all have bad days—days when everything seems to go wrong, days when we feel out of synch with the universe and our tempers flare. I had one of these days not too long ago...

It began early in the morning when my two-year old suddenly no longer wanted to brush her hair, refused to wear the shoes that she had just the day before declared were her 'favorite' pair, and announced, "I want Daddy...only Daddy." Unfortunately, the bad morning continued when I stepped into the office. One minor problem after another plagued me throughout the day, only adding fuel to the fire. By the end of the day, I was in a truly foul mood.

Driving home from work, I knew just what I needed to do... put on the running shoes and go on a run along the lake. I needed to let off some steam and was looking forward to my first run of the spring outside. I had spent the last few months bored from running on the treadmill inside and was eager to get some real road miles under my feet and see what was going on around the lake.

I managed to change into my running clothes and shoes and slip out of the house before my husband returned from daycare with my daughter. The next 30-minutes or so were mine. No one knew where I was and there wouldn't be any phone calls, emails, or cranky two-year-olds demanding my attention.

Within a few minutes, I passed over a bridge (closed to vehicular traffic), and was alongside the lake. I was still in a bad mood, but for the next mile and half, I tried my hardest to put the annoyances of the day behind me. I

deliberately focused on taking in the sights and sounds of spring at the lake. I would see something interesting—the last patch of ice, dark and thin, floating aimlessly out in the middle of the lake, two ducks sticking their heads into the water in search of food, a new house that had popped up where an old cabin had been last fall, a thick layer of sand lining the side of the road waiting to be swept up—and temporarily forget my troubles. I would hear interesting things too—a lone Canada Goose honking repeatedly, the whoosh of water gushing into the lake with each culvert I passed, and an almost laughing call coming from a loon flying overhead—and my worries faded even more.

At 1.5 miles into the run, I arrived at the town beach. As I turned around to head back home, I remembered one of our family visits to the beach last summer—friends from Maine were with us and the kids had a blast wading in the water, squealing in delight with each freshwater mussel shell discovery. I found myself smiling and looking forward to our first visit to the beach this year as I picked up speed during my 1.5-mile return.

As I passed back over the bridge, a smiling middle-aged man standing at the end of the bridge, called to me. “Excuse me,” he began, “how long has this bridge been closed?” He continued to explain that the rock on the other side of the bridge was where he and his dad used to jump into the lake more than forty years ago. He recounted how it was there at that spot in the lake where he learned to swim and caught his first fish ever. We exchanged stories for a few minutes about enjoying the lake and then I excused myself to finish the run home.

At some point during my 30-minute run, I’m not sure exactly where, but somewhere and somehow, I had managed to shake off my foul mood. I was ready to spend the evening with my daughter and husband and couldn’t remember exactly what had gone wrong at work that day.

I think Wallace Stevens, one of America’s most respected poets, explained the calming, restorative effects of lakes best when he wrote: *“Perhaps the truth depends on a walk around the lake.”*

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