

Basking, Bagels, and Bonds: An Exploration of Savoring at a Coffee Shop

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On a Sunday in February, my two friends and I decided to go to brunch midday at a diner in Virginia Beach called Brickhouse Diner. Brickhouse Diner is a classic diner serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Though we all lived relatively close to this diner, our meal was the first time we had eaten at this restaurant. Our friendship has formed from my husband's colleagues at work over the past year, and this was the first time that we three girls decided to meet without any of our significant others and enjoy being in the company of women only. Due to the unique, distinctive, and exciting nature of this brunch, I decided to participate in savoring concepts explored by Bryant and Veroff (2017) in their book, *Savoring: A New Model of Positive Experience*, to fully immerse and enjoy myself in this time with friends.

Though my initial idea was to enjoy brunch with friends and savor that experience, there were several external stimuli vying for my "attention resources" that prohibited my savoring the meal together (Bryant & Veroff, 2017). A few key stimuli include being several minutes late to the meal due to traffic, resulting in feelings of shame, which is the negative counterpart to basking, a concept of savoring; struggling to hear over the chatter and noise of a diner on a busy Sunday morning, as well as other competing sensory stimuli, which negatively impacted my ability to enter a state of flow for the moment I was in; and also my nervousness for socializing with this new group dynamic, which inhibited my ability to fully reach absorption and be immersed in the present moment (Bryant & Veroff, 2017). Despite these initial setbacks, I thoroughly enjoyed brunch, but I believe the sensory stimuli and complex emotions competed with my attentional focus for brunch to be considered a true savoring experience.

Luckily, my savoring experience began at 17 Hands Coffee, a local coffee shop in Virginia Beach. We had enjoyed our conversation so much and were craving something sweet after our meal, that we decided to continue the conversation at a coffee shop. I have visited the

coffee shop many times, and the familiar surroundings reduced my stress and allowed me to sharpen my focus on a more balanced blend of self-focused and world-focused savoring (Bryant & Veroff, 2017). Since I was the only one who had been to the coffee shop, I assumed the role of leader and suggested key menu items and drink choices for my two friends. Standing in line together, I felt the meta-awareness of savoring for the first time that morning, as I realized I was “sharing with others” my knowledge of the coffee shop to assist them with their choices in the hopes of yielding the most pleasant outcome for them (Bryant & Veroff, 2017). This realization allowed me to “bask” in this temporary role of stewardship and led to a small bit of self-congratulation, and I felt a sense of accomplishment when they enjoyed their coffees and pastries immensely (Bryant & Veroff, 2017).

My own enjoyment of my cake pop and latte was compounded by sharing the coffee shop with others. I realized as I enjoyed my latte that I was drinking a limited-edition Valentine’s Day-themed drink that was only available for February, and this “temporal awareness” that this particular flavor combination of latte was fleeting on the menu heightened my savoring of the drink, as I was not sure if I would be able to experience it again (Bryant & Veroff, 2017). I paid particular attention to the weather as well, which was unusually sunny and warm that day, and the plants growing throughout the coffee shop in my world-focused savoring moments.

Though the drinks and pastries were delicious, the true sustenance I received from the meal was the enriching, stimulating, and empathetic communication with my two friends. We had casual conversations about niceties at the diner during brunch, but the more intimate and quiet atmosphere of the coffee shop allowed us to bring the conversation to a depth our friendship had not gone before. We discussed at length current events, religion, philosophy, fulfillment of youth, deep-seated fears, spirituality, and the overall meaning of life. Though the

subject matter was heavy, the conversation and time passed very pleasantly, as we all valued the various subjects and enjoyed sharing them with one another. The savoring process I could most closely relate to is marveling, as I felt a sense of awe and a loss of time and self throughout our conversation and meal. In reviewing Bryant and Veroff's (2017) work, I most closely associated with this process, as the marveling process of savoring has deep roots in spirituality, a sense of mystery, and an overall reverence for the experience. However, as we reached the third hour of conversation, I found myself pulling back into self-awareness, an inhibitor of marveling, due to the various responsibilities I had yet to fulfill on that Sunday, such as feeding my pets their afternoon meal and doing laundry (Bryant & Veroff, 2017).

One aspect of Bryant and Veroff's (2017) work that I think further study could be beneficial is the notion that one's personality, behaviors, thoughts, and personal history impact one's ability *to* savor. Furthermore, the idea of a person's perceptions and lived experiences could influence *how* one savors through their natural inclinations. Upon reflection, the savoring process of marveling being the process I most closely associated with during the savoring of this food communication exercise aligns closely with the subject matter of communication between my friends and me, but also my personal history in my religious upbringing. I frequently associate food communication with tones of reverence, sacredness, and spirituality, which are key elements of the marveling process of savoring (Bryant & Veroff, 2017). Therefore, my own previous experiences and learned behaviors could make certain savoring processes, such as marveling, more natural for me than other savoring processes.

A further exploration of one's preference for world-focused or self-focused savoring could be studied. For me, I was surprised to note that much of my savoring experience included world-focused savoring. The nature of eating out with others could have a more worldly

emphasis than other savoring experiences. Still, this experience made me reflect on where I naturally focus my energy towards enjoyment and savoring, and I discovered a more external locus of control overall than I initially expected (Bryant & Veroff, 2017).

Though we ended our coffee and snack break in the early afternoon, I found myself participating in several additional dimensions of savoring that enhanced the overall experience, particularly in sharing with others and counting blessings (Bryant & Veroff, 2017). I enjoyed reminiscing and retelling certain anecdotes with my husband, I ruminated on my evolving friendship with the two friends I saw that day, and I am currently enjoying the memory-building aspect of this paper for this food communication experience. These are more self-focused savoring concepts, which align with Bryant and Veroff's (2017) notion that self-focused savoring processes are more likely to occur *after* the initial moment of savoring.

To conclude, I found this exercise illuminating in putting the literature into practice, and I appreciated being both an active participant and avid observer in a savoring experience. This exercise created many moments of reflection on my preferred processes of savoring, the dimensions that bring the most enjoyment to the savoring process for me, and the natural inclinations of behavior, thought patterns, etc. that make one's savoring process truly unique.

References

Bryant, F. B., & Veroff, J. (2017). *Savoring: A New Model of Positive Experience*. Psychology Press.