

TechNews

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TechNews is published on the Tuesday of each week of the academic year. Deadline for all submissions and announcements is 11:59 p.m. on the Friday prior to publication. Articles, photos, and illustrations must be submitted electronically to the TechNews website at technewsit.com.

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Arguably, the worst week in recent history

Hannah Larson
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Perhaps you've been following the news. To say there have been a few notable, awful, episodes is the understatement of the year.

Let's start with a local scope. The weather in Chicago is always fickle, but this past Wednesday night and Thursday morning proved to be quite the surprise. A routine thunderstorm produced five inches of rainfall, causing a massive amount of flooding. Governor Pat Quinn constituted that 38 Illinois counties were "disaster areas," and Chicagoland seemed particularly impacted; major interstates were closed, the Chicago River's flow was reversed into Lake Michigan to relieve tunnels and reservoirs, and a sinkhole swallowed three cars on the south side. Albany Park experienced a major overflow of the river, which Mayor Rahm Emanuel wasted no time using this unfortunate event to announce plans for construction of a tunnel to avoid this annual occurrence; the tunnel will cost \$45 to \$55 million (with \$40 million already pledged) according to the Chicago Tribune, and is expected to start next year.

Temperatures are expected to return to the 60s this weekend. On the brighter side of things, the Illinois House has approved a bill for comprehensive sexual education (based on new curriculum requirements in middle and high schools), and passed another bill outlining the basis of a medical marijuana industry (a four year contract, and strict requirements, a feat nonetheless).

Hippies and liberals, rejoice. On to national news. The deadly fertilizer plant explosion in the town of West, Texas death toll has officially been set at 14, where as many as 200 were injured according to Fox News (CNN had originally reported up to 35 deaths, but this is no surprise concerning their credibility, especially after their day-long broadcast of false information concerning the Boston Marathon suspect.) Authorities have reported that a significant portion of the town was leveled in the explosion. President Obama declared the region a state of emergency, bringing in national disaster relief efforts.

Speaking of the Boston Marathon, the bigoted and judgmental reaction has been extremely crude, and just as devastating of a phenomenon as the terrorist act itself. Three people have been declared dead, while roughly 100 people have reported injuries (CNN again inaccurately reported up to 141), according to the Chicago Tribune and local Boston outlets.

These aren't the only victims of the Boston Marathon explosions.

Subsequent victims of this backlash

include the Bangladeshi man who was beaten by another man for being "an Arab" in the Bronx (according to New York Police), the Palestinian woman who was with her young daughter and a friend (both women happened to be wearing hijabs) who was attacked in Boston; the salacious man white man hurled "terrorist" and other profanities at the group, punching the woman in the shoulder (according to Jezebel.com), as well as the two young men (one a high school student who feared for his life and family according to multiple reports) who were featured on the cover of the New York Post with the headline, "Feds seek these two pictured at Boston Marathon." Other reports of Islamophobic backlash according to local

Boston Muslim groups and news outlets have reported more incidents, like the Saudi Arabian national who was injured, interviewed by authorities, and inaccurately dubbed a suspect by the media (insert the Glen Beck conspiracy theory, implicating this person's involvement in the explosions, that my Editor-in-Chief has just informed me of), a Brown University student who was literally tagged as a suspect on Facebook; not to mention the surge of violence that gripped Boston following the attack, resulting in the death of an MIT police officer, death of one of the bombing suspects, plus the essential shut-down of Boston; finally resulting in the apprehension of FBI's suspect Dzhokhar Tsarvnaev.

Let's just take a moment. Breathe. This barrage of morbid national incidents has had yet another unfavorable outcome—a cloud of judgment of foreign affairs, as well as important domestic matters.

Wednesday proved a significant point in the nation's debate over gun control measures. The Senate procured 55 votes in favor of a bill that would expand background checks for gun purchasers, a ban on assault weapons and high capacity gun magazines. The sponsors of the bill failed to secure the 60 needed to pass the bill through the Senate. This decision outraged President Obama, as well as those who were there on the behalf of the Newtown shooting victims.

That same day, authorities apprehended Paul Kevin Curtis, the Mississippi man who has been implicated in sending ricin-laced letters to President Obama, and Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS). The Elvis Presley and Hank Williams Jr. impersonator is an active conspiracy theorist, and has an online presence rife with alternative opinions. This domestic terrorist throwback is reminiscent of the anthrax-laced mail that surfaced shortly after 9/11.

Honestly, when's the last time we considered foreign affairs?

Important foreign affair stories developing include India's growing frustration, and

increased sexual violence. Following the outrage the public expressed over the brutal and fatal gang rape of a 23-year-old woman, another demonstration has unfolded due to the report of a 5-year-old girl being abducted, raped, sexually, and physically assaulted, in East Delhi according to NPR. Details include a two day protest by local citizens, allegations that the local police were bribed in order to keep the incident quiet (the equivalent of \$40), and the call for the death penalty for the two men that have been implicated in the crime.

Following an onslaught of domestic terrorism, due in part to the elections that took place this Saturday, a series of explosions killed nine people who attended noon prayers at two mosques in Baghdad, Iraq this past Friday. The Thursday before saw 32 deaths from a suicide bomber who targeted a café. Imagine our grievances of the Boston Marathon bombing, on steroids.

Articles reflecting the gloomy state of current affairs are certain.

Notably, author (and staunch New Englander) Tom Perrotta published an article in the New Yorker, comparing his experience 9/11 to that of the Boston Marathon attacks, in a lovely metaphor. The Onion published an article simple titled "Jesus, this week," and various news outlets have published their online-versions of the enumeration of this week's tribulations; most of them include a picture of an adorable kitten, with an equally adorable caption.

December 21, 2012 was the supposed Mayan doomsday, but it was implemented as a date of change. Five months of heinous occurrences make me second guess the apocalypse.

Not the change that we elected President Obama for his first time (incidentally the last time I had a hair cut), but the kind of change that is dismissive and transforms the way we interpret the world; whether we are aware of this or not, isn't as easy as posting a Facebook status.

This week, the news was rampant with negativity and everyone was on the same, solemn page. We disregarded Justin Bieber's Anne Frank "belieber" comment, and engaged in conversations about social constructs, social protections, and social problems.

Though the fact that many of these conversations came out of racist and ill-intent, they happened nonetheless.

Unfortunately the efficacy of these conversations won't be felt until long after these current events become historical junctures, where we branch off, and change daily behavior.

This week won't be remembered from the onslaught of appalling events, but the abundance of overreactions, false information, and actions that make me seriously doubt the humanity and kindness left in the public sphere.

Harmony within, and in each moment

Ameena Payne
TECHNEWS WRITER

Last week I wrote a bit about attaining authenticity in each moment, and I thought that would be the perfect Segway into attaining harmony within and in each moment. When I speak of harmony, I am speaking of a peaceful bliss between mind, body, and soul – a peaceful bliss that you can feel running to the depths of your core. Currently, this topic resonates because I just participated in an evening of Prānāyām in an informal setting – with a group of friends – practicing Ujjayi.

Prānāyām is the art of yoga breathing, and because breath is life – literally – it is a wonder to me why we don't focus more on understanding how breath influences and can manipulate our disposition. Growing up, I would participate in Prānāyām (as I tagged

along with my Dad to Chicago's International Association for World Peace) however, the meaning was a bit lost on me as a child, and it wasn't until very recently, that the importance of breath guided me back toward this practice.

Breath is one of our most vital functions. Proper breathing brings more oxygen to the blood and to the brain, controls the Prana, the vital life energy. Prānāyām is considered one of the highest forms of purification and self-discipline, covering both mind and body – the focus is not only intrapersonal healing but interpersonal as well.

Think about when you're angry, anxious, and/or fearful. What is your breath like? What would you say is your default reaction to pressure at this current moment?

It is likely that it's vastly different than the breathing you experience when you're in peaceful bliss (that place that was discussed a

few weeks ago in which you feel most natural). That's because your body is not separate from your mood and your actions. When you're confronted with a challenge, your body reacts. Your body, your mood, your words, and your actions are all interconnected and typically pretty consistent with one another.

Becoming aware of your breath, the practice of Prānāyām, is a way of being mindful of (and attentive to) yourself. Eventually, this will spread into daily life and interaction with others. That's what makes this practice so powerful and so practical.

I am not the expert in these practices, but if you are interested in being connected to organizations and individuals that support these values and practices, please email me at Ameena@AmeenaPayne as this is not subjugated knowledge.