It all started last week when a work colleague told of her sighting of a rattlesnake.

She even provided a cell-phone photograph of the eight-rattle viper without its head after it was whacked off with a shovel.

Another day, I heard a story about two ranchers who discovered a large rattler in a pasture and ran over it with a pickup.

That was followed by one more story about a small boy who received anti-venom treatments after he was bitten by an adolescent rattler during play.

Needless to say, my thoughts turned to rattlesnakes last Saturday morning as I slipped on my running shoes for a run along a cow path near Jeffrey Lake I've used for years.

A rattler could be lurking under every yucca plant I passed or stretched across my way when I crested a hill.

Our daughter Betsy, who loves anything that zigzags through the grass, suggested I take my cell phone if I was worried.

"What would you do if I called?" I asked.

"I'd jump on the jet ski and come find you. Then I'd kill a cow, cut out its heart and put it where the snake bit you—to draw out the poison," she explained with the slightest hint of sarcasm.

“Then I’d call a helicopter to come get you. Haven’t you always wanted to ride in a helicopter?”

“I have ridden in a helicopter,” I told her, a bit disappointed she wasn’t buying into my irrational fear.

Without her sympathy, the dog and I started off—my radar on high alert for any rattling noises in the grass.

Halfway into the run, I realized I hadn’t heard anything unnerving along the way.

It was then I noticed snow on the mountain, a rugged prairie plant flowering on the side of a hill, and a delicate spider’s web laced between two stalks of buffalo grass that sparkled with dew.

“This is living in the moment,” I told myself, realizing I’d abandoned whatever deep-seated fear—driven by something which had nothing to do with rattlesnakes—that had taken me away from living life.

Ann Wilson Schaef writes that fear is a signal that we have abandoned the gods that protect and guide us. Fear also takes us away from living in the moment.

“You’re back,” Betsy said with a smug smile upon my return.

“Yes,” I replied. “I’m back.”