

Time to Move On

I have always heard people say, "You can't put toothpaste back in the tube..." I always wondered about the truthfulness of that statement. I mean, the toothpaste had to get into the tube somehow, didn't it? Why couldn't someone re-insert spent toothpaste? I decided I would settle this for myself once and for all...

I went in the bathroom and found an almost new large tube of Crest. So the test would have plenty of data, I squeezed about half of the tube into a bowl in a long zigzag ribbon of toothpaste. "So far, so good," I thought to myself, "I really don't see a problem here."

At first, I decided it might be easier to leave the fresh squeezed toothpaste in the long ribbon in the bottom of the bowl -- that way it would be easier to align as I slid it back into the tube. I scooped up about an inch-long toothpaste segment and, with the skill of a Swiss watch-maker, I perfectly aligned the paste with the tube opening and ever-so-slowly began to re-insert it into the tube. I thought to myself, "I will be finished with this little experiment in a matter minutes." My mind began to think about lunch options.

Trying to stay focused, I noticed as I further pressed the ribbon of toothpaste into the opening, instead of going into the tube as obedient toothpaste should, it merely impacted on the surface of the opening -- very little actually re-entered the tube. Besides this disturbing fact, I noticed that I had somehow dipped my left arm into the bowl and smeared a stray ribbon of toothpaste onto my shirt sleeve.

After changing shirts, I decided to try another approach. I took the spoon and stirred the long ribbon of toothpaste into a single pile of paste. I again took my spoon and tried re-inserting individual scoops from the pile back into the tube, but mostly what I accomplished was getting toothpaste all over my hands, the sides of the tube, and in my eyebrows (I guess I got a little too close to the experiment). "Well," I reasoned, "the scientific process is hazardous at times."

After cleaning my eyebrows and hands -- not to be outdone -- I decided to think outside the tube. What if I warmed the bowl of toothpaste back into a liquid form and then poured it back into the tube? After congratulating myself on my genius, I took the remainder of the bowl of paste and put it in the microwave. I reasoned that since toothpaste is at least twice as thick as chicken soup, I should microwave the toothpaste on high for twice as long as I would a similar sized bowl of soup. I set the microwave for the desired duration, and walked away.

After heating the paste for a few minutes, I noticed the bowl of toothpaste had indeed turned into a liquid -- but it had also exploded and splattered all over the interior of the microwave oven, thus ending my experiment. Even though this was a mini-disaster, I could not help but notice the minty-fresh smell of the microwave oven!

Well, maybe the old adage is true after all -- you really can't put toothpaste back into the tube. But perhaps an even better question is -- why would anyone ever want to?

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In a similar way in life, it is easy for us to find ourselves in a mode of spending a great deal of energy and effort trying to re-live past glories, recover lost loves, or put things back exactly the way they used to be. More often than not, these efforts are just as futile and ridiculous as trying to re-insert toothpaste into a tube. We should enjoy the minty-fresh smell of the past without trying to live in it! Sometimes it is time to move on, to flip the page, to go to the next chapter, to discover new challenges -- to actually live life, not to try and re-live it.

Well, I think my little toothpaste experiment is over -- I've learned my lesson. Tune in tomorrow when I attempt to unscramble an egg!

(Originally written: September 13, 2018)

[Note: Someone asked me if the above story is true. Unlike almost all of my other stories recorded on these pages, the above story is pure fiction. I didn't REALLY try to put toothpaste back into the tube. (Not yet, anyway!)]