Cerish the winter

Whether we like it or not, winter is coming. So baton down the hatches, put on the long underweare, Honestly, don't look forward to the cold months of the year. Snowg is great to go to snow ball fights on the icy roads and sidewalks, the chill of exiting a shower, or easily spread illnesses. However, whether we like it or not, most of us are going to have to deal with winter, and for the best of it. So, in preparation for winter, which is astronomically still a month off, I'll share some ideas hopefully to make this winter more enjoyable. One way to stay healthy is to practice a healthy lifestyle. This means eating a healthy diet, getting plenty of sleep, staying active, and drinking plenty of water.

First of all, one has to stay healthy. With the holidays coming and the seasonal flu season, it's important to take precautions that we've come to appreciate recently: (a) washing or sanitizing hands regularly; (b) covering mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing; and (c) remaining isolated when one has a fever. However, there is a lot more to the prevention of illness. Eating healthy foods (lots of vegetables and fruits) and getting enough sleep are key to keeping an immune system strong.

Additionally, taking vitamin D is important because it helps our bodies absorb calcium, which is important for bone health. As we get older, our bodies need more calcium to keep our bones strong. Vitamin D becomes less available to our bodies as we age, so it's important to get enough from our diet or through supplements.

Finally, exercising regularly (which requires extra effort in the winter) will help one's health as well. Not only will the body get its endorphins (which it needs to feel good) but it will keep the heart, muscles, and joints active and limber.

A healthy person is much better able to enjoy the outdoors. For example, one can participate in a winter sport or go on a hike. Whether you are going to see a movie or a show, one has to find activities that can be done inside. Watching TV or playing video games are two options. However, we need to be more creative in our leisure activities because we need to avoid any trouble finding something to stimulate the mind and the soul. Getting together with friends to play indoor games, like cards or board games, can be a fun and healthy way to connect with others.

Also, although cold, winter is a great time to go outside. Bundle up with many layers (if sometimes it gets 5-6 layers deep) and take a walk in the fresh cold air. A brisk walk can really warm up the body — a brisk walk can also help with blood circulation, which is important for overall health. In addition, if you are not feeling well, you should drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated.

Another winter activity to consider is to go on a hike. Hiking is a great way to get exercise and enjoy the outdoors. There are many trails available in the area, and you can find one that suits your level of fitness.

Lastly, if you are looking for something more low-key, you can try indoor activities like reading or watching a movie. Whether you are going to see a movie or a show, one has to find activities that can be done inside. Watching TV or playing video games are two options. However, we need to be more creative in our leisure activities because we need to avoid any trouble finding something to stimulate the mind and the soul. Getting together with friends to play indoor games, like cards or board games, can be a fun and healthy way to connect with others.

Off-year election offers lessons even a dunce can see

Weeks after the November 3 off-year elections, a rural Illinois grade school superintendent said "averages" come to mind. "If you were camping and you had one foot in the ice chest and the other in the campfire," he said, "I guess on average you would be comfortable." The perils of extremism are one of several lessons from the vote — the most obvious being that no party or candidate should take for granted their core constituencies, whether young or minority voters, or independent and moderate voters. Little is permanently decided even a class clowns could see that but too few big shots.

Republicans suffered big losses in 2006 and 2008, but GOP leaders discovered successfully ran to be New York's new governor and Republican Bob McDonald did the same in Virginia. True, Democrat Bill Owens scored an upset in New York's 23rd Congressional District — held by Republicans since the Civil War — but reasonable people could agree his victory owed something to Republican infighting there. Democrats should assume nothing; Republicans should not either.

Imperial objectives: The campaigns were mostly proactive and positive, with few attacks on the still-popular President Obama. Also, McDonald tempered his rhetoric and moved to the center, and Christie mostly left New Jersey's blue voters realize that incumbent Gov. Chris Christie was a former chairman of one of the biggest Wall Street gangs: Goldman Sachs.

Also, the issues were mostly local (and even foreign were American jobs — or the lack of them — are local problems at their hearts). Winners were for the most part practical folks less steeped in ideological thinking than committed to finding solutions, People voted for promise of performance, not politics.

Lastly, looking at the feet on the streets, Obama Nation stayed home from the polls — and the campaigns beforehand. Low turnout, from African-American and young voters hurt Democrats, and shifting preferences from moderates and independents helped Republicans.

Less neutral thoughts: After conservative Democrats diluted the economic stimulus and cut help to the unemployed, and after continuing to fight health care reforms popular public options and $2000 through a tax on the wealthiest, Dem candidates needed to run forceful campaigns. The ones in Virginia and New Jersey were lousy. U.S. voters understandably wonder whether Democrats will ever get their act together and ACT on. or will be content with the bi-partisan coddling with Big Business.

The Zephyr could've done better, too. Obama could've been more forceful in dealing with the turncoat Democrats who aren't supporting popular reforms; he could've been clearer about the mess that was left for him to clean up; he couldn't be more populist in appointments he ended up giving to Wall Street insiders Timmy Gulliver (Secretary of the Treasury) and Jon Corzine (National Economic Council director); and he could’ve been more involved in the movement-building-style campaign that his 2008 Presidential campaign showed.

The 2010 congressional races are looking a lot better for conservatives — notice I didn't say Republicans, conservative columnist Cal Thomas recently wrote in USA Today, "If they don't deliver or are seen as wanting power more than the sake of power, politicians will be tossed out of office."

However, many in the GOP continue to be dogmatic extremists who celebrated driving moderate Republican Dede Scozzafava out of the 23rd District race and moderate Republican Sen. Arlen Specter into the Democratic fold.

As always, the White House senior adviser David Axelrod commented, "If there is a big backlash against Democrats, why did we just win a seat in a district that hasn't elected a Democrat in 150 years."?

Maybe voters couldn't stomach Bill Owens' opponent, but the fact that counting on their opponents to routinely field fools will lose like lillites at Spelling Bees.

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