

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**Peter Schwartzman**

Cherish the winter

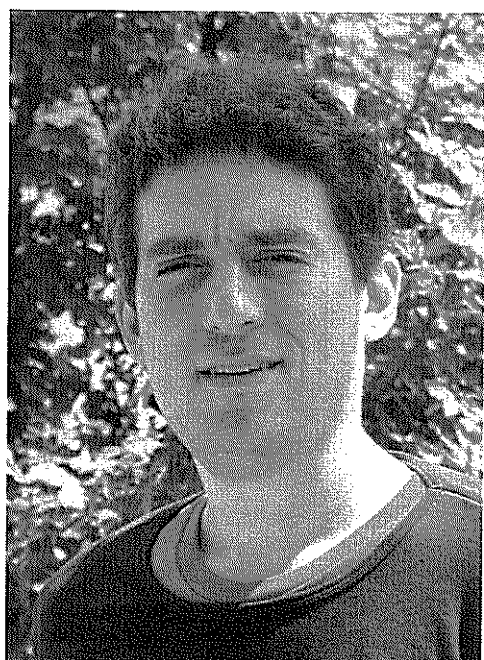
Whether we like it or not, winter is coming. So batten down the hatches and break out the long underwear. Honestly, I don't look forward to the cold months of the year. Snow is great but it doesn't make up for the icy roads and sidewalks, the chills of exiting a shower, or easily spread illnesses. However, whether we like it or not, most of us are stuck here so we should make 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 merrier than previous ones.

First of all, one has to stay healthy. With H1N1 making its rounds and the seasonal flu soon to arrive, it is best to follow the precautions that we've come to appreciate recently: (a) washing or sanitizing hands regularly; (b) covering mouth and nose when sneezing and coughing; and, (c) remaining isolated when one has a fever. However, there is a lot more to the prevention of illness. Eating healthy food (lots of vegetables and fruits) and getting sufficient amounts of sleep are keys to keeping an immune system strong. Additionally, taking Vitamin C (~1,000 mg) and Vitamin D (~400 IU per day) can help as well. Vitamin D, which appears to help ward off depression as well as have many other health benefits, needs to be taken during the winter months since our bodies are only able to produce it when our skin absorbs UV light (which is greatly reduced during the winter because of the Sun's low angle). Lastly, 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 what the winter has to offer. Clearly, one has to find activities that can be done inside. Watching TV or playing video games are two very popular indoor activities. However, we need not be resigned to these mundane and largely stationary forms of entertainment. How about reading a great book or watching a thought-provoking movie? Now that we have a full-fledged book store in town (i.e., Stone's Alley on Seminary Street), one shouldn't have 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 also be a fantastic way to feel connected and festive.

Also, although cold, winter is still a great time to go outside. Bundle up with many layers (I sometimes go 5-6 layers deep) and take a walk in the fresh cold air. A brisk walk can really warm the body up—a fringe benefit of the exercise. On a clear winter's night, brought on by a passing high pressure system, one can see a ton of stars and make many wishes.

Going outside includes getting out of the house in general—a very important part of getting through the winter successfully. There are many events going on, it just takes a little initiative to check out what's being listed in the two main city papers (both have web-based links for activities as well) and a bit more motivation to go to an unfamiliar facility or program. While it might be easier to stay home, getting out and meeting old and new friends will do a lot to improve community relationships and personal



psychological states.

Mid-February, I am about to lose my mind. I begin to wonder if it will ever be warm again. One way to counter that cynicism is to do things that remind us of spring. Plants may not grow much in the winter but caring for them makes for a beautiful living space as well as one with cleaner and fresher air. Building birdhouses or knitting pastel shawls both serve as productive entertainment and a reminder of warmer things to come. For those who long for recreation, yoga might not beat intense aerobic exercise but it sure does the body good (and keeps it fit for more strenuous activities as the days get longer).

Among other things that one can do over winter, don't forget about all those great New Years' Resolutions that you plan to make. Why not start on Dec. 1st and use the first month as a "breaking in" period.

One resolution that we could all benefit from is reducing frivolous expenses. Buying from local merchants (rather than Big Box stores) will likely enhance our community in tangible ways; just ask an owner of such an establishment. But there is more here than meets the eye. By reducing your spending on non-essentials, you are opening up opportunities to reinvest in this community in more significant ways. There are local organizations who do a lot to make life better here. They need your monetary support as well as your volunteerism. Several groups are feeling the economic crunch really badly and some will have to close their doors (and their services) due to budget cuts at state levels. The more we can give to make up for this shortfall the better our city will be and the less painful will be this period.

Another resolution worth looking into has to do with weatherizing one's dwelling. Not only will this likely pay for itself in mere months, but it will go a long way to reduce carbon footprints and climate change.

There you have it. This winter is going to be great. We are going to remain active, venture into new arenas, and reject cynicism. As always, if you find something particularly fruitful please don't hesitate to share it with others.

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