

A season to be endured

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Lexington Park, MD - There is a lot to hate about winter. Modern-day human beings, those who like to control their lives with thermostats, are no doubt finding the bone-chilling temperatures unbearable. Dressing in several layers of clothes isn't much fun and neither is cabin fever. This past week there were even some places in Florida that had temperatures that can make the average person shiver. People who live in the Mid-Atlantic Region by choice often do so because they enjoy the change of seasons. However, much of that love is bestowed on the other three seasons.

Unless you ski, ice skate (on a real frozen pond), enjoy shoveling and plowing plus chopping wood, excel at ice and snow art; love to knit or enjoy modeling long underwear, winter, it would seem, is a pretty worthless time of year.

It could be worse—much worse. In February 2005 Field and Stream magazine published a lengthy but fascinating story entitled, “Five Laws of Winter Survival.” The piece was written by Keith McCafferty, who is the publication’s “survival and outdoor skills editor.” The essay begins by talking about “sleeping in the wilderness.” Law number one ought to be “don’t ever sleep in the wilderness.” But it isn’t. The laws are—be able to live without fire, stay where you are [if you’re lost], learn to trap, matches [for starting a fire] aren’t enough and confidence [as it relates to staying alive] counts. The author of these laws no doubt drafted them in a location far from insulated buildings with reliable heat sources and backup generators, organized and efficient snow removal, grocery stores and human companionship.

In our corner of the world we have a lot to help us endure winter. The human element is crucial. The individuals who bring comfort and companionship to the desperate, the plow-jockeys who clear a path for vehicles to get around and the service/delivery people who put their own hides on the line to make sure our lives don’t miss a beat when the mercury drops to an arctic level deserve praise and thanks. We should extend a gloved hand to them in appreciation. We should extend the other hand to those who are less fortunate and not faring so well in the frigid conditions. Letting them have your gloves might be a good start.

While spring, summer and fall are seasons to be savored, winter is mostly one to be endured. It’s a time to hone our altruistic skills. In some ways, it’s the most important season of them all.

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Contact Marty Madden at marty.madden@thebaynet.com

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