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mind • body • spirit
by Carmen Siering

The Season of My Discontent

I'm a Hoosier, born and bred. I've lived here all my life. Even so, I still struggle with Midwest weather patterns. It seems to me there are few truly mild spring days before summer is upon us in full force. And then we barely get to enjoy crisp, autumn weather before we are pulling on parkas and shoveling our driveways.

One summer several years ago, it was hot and humid and I was miserable. I'm not shy about expressing how I feel, and my husband has heard it all. At some point, he had heard enough and suggested that while it was fine to whine about the weather, maybe I could pick just one season to dislike and learn to quietly live with the other three. Well, that was easy — I chose winter as the season of my discontent.

Since then I've taken him up on his offer and I complain long and hard about winter, from the moment the furnace kicks on until the day it is warm enough to wear sandals. I really don't like the cold.

One of the things I dislike about winter is it makes getting any kind of exercise more difficult. For instance, the walk you can take before breakfast or after dinner at other times of the year is now taken in the dark. In a parka and boots. Plus a hat, gloves, and scarf. Even going to the gym is a dismal proposition when you have to get up before sunrise and the streets haven't even been plowed. It's almost as difficult to go after work when all you want to do is curl up on the couch under a blanket and stare at the fire, or maybe Netflix.

For me, the hardest part of any workout is just getting out of bed (if it's a morning workout) or getting out the door (if it's after work). Once I've accomplished that, I've learned to keep on moving. On particularly bad days, I just head to the YMCA, get on the track, and start walking in circles. If I've walked for a while and haven't come up with anything better to do, I pack it in and head home. At least I've gotten in a mile or two.

I recently attended a yoga workshop where the instructor demonstrated a 15-minute sequence he said would be perfect for a morning home practice. He explained that while we might all want to do an hour of yoga in the morning, if we take an all-or-nothing approach, more than likely nothing is what we end up doing. I find that to be true. On the other hand, if you start with 15 minutes, there's a very good chance you will add on to that until, without any intention at all, you will have increased your session to an hour or more.

Winter has to end eventually, and I've found that if I keep at it, doggedly finding ways to motivate myself to get up in the dark and go to the gym, at some point the sun starts coming up a little earlier and setting a little later. Before you know it, it's hot and humid again. I just love that. Ask my husband. *

Carmen Siering is Bloom's managing editor. A wife, mother, and grandmother, she has a Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition and is a professional writer and editor. Contact her at carmen@magbloom.com.

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