

Coping with Coldness

Category: Cold

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | February 2, 2024

My family and friends constantly tease me about my state of perpetual coldness. On the mildest winter day or even a chilly summer one, I will don a thermal shirt, sweatshirt, and hoodie, often under a coat of a varying degree of warmth. I am the only theater usher who does her job while wearing an outdoor coat, even though the dress code for ushers is a white top with black pants.

I do not understand my history of coldness. My father couldn't sleep without an open window, no matter what the outdoor thermometer read, while my mother thought that winter gloves, scarves, and hats were a waste of money. My brother sets his home thermostat at arctic temperatures. I admire the pretty blouses worn by friends; they nod with familiarity at one of the three winter coats I alternate.

Yet I have recently begun to notice a difference in my internal temperature. There are times when I forego the thermal shirt or take off the hoodie. The air is warming outside, and this concerns me. I am not a scientist who can easily incorporate the correct terminology into an essay, but I am an educated person who cannot help but be aware of climate change. Yes, my hometown had a stretch of bitterly cold weather in January, but compared to the frosty days of my youth, this mini-chill was bearable.

I also worry about figurative coldness—the coldness that defines how people with diverse views treat other people. A glacier separates Democrats from Republicans these days; prejudices of various sorts create a frozen wall of ice that individuals who embrace reason and inclusion must chip away at in order to end all kinds of discrimination. I can always add another layer of clothing to make my physical self warmer, but all I can do to battle the emotional, psychic coldness in our society is to try to be a decent, accepting person who respects everyone, especially those whose opinions differ from mine.

I will cope with my bodily coldness; I will do my best to address the larger issue of global warming; and I will attempt to contribute warmth to a world that needs more happiness, humor, and hugs. As for catching a cold, I can only hope for the best—and keep a few cans of chicken soup in my pantry.

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