

Make your own heat

Almost every day you will find me on my fat bike, thundering over ice- and snow-packed gravel roads around Bemidji.

Every day I am amazed that nobody else is out soaking in this epic landscape. Who else will see the tracks that ruffed grouse made? Who else will experience the sharp pleasure of moving in tandem with a doe bounding across a field? Who else will watch the moon rise through the blue-grey striations of the sky?

My aloneness puzzles me. Where is everybody? And then I remember, with heat rolling off my back from my exertion, that everybody is inside trying to stay warm. Watching television, but missing the show.

The first winter we lived here, my husband bought a snow blower from the farm store. After he unloaded the orange behemoth in the garage, I studied the metal contraption. Then, I turned on my heel and headed into the house. I had some thinking to do.

It wasn't until the next day at supper that I had the words I needed.

"We should return that snow blower," I began.

My husband stopped



Kelsi Turner

eating and looked at me questioningly.

"I love shoveling snow. Love it," I said, "If you return that snow blower and buy me one of those big shovels with a bendy handle, then I promise you that I will wake early with you to shovel on the days our driveway needs it."

He agreed to return the snow blower.

"It'll be a date," I added. And it has been.

When we step outside at 5 a.m. to shovel, the whole world is hushed. My husband and I don't speak. We don't need to. Our shoveling choreography is practiced. We are alone, together.

Wrapped inside my cocoon of layers, all sound is softened by the snow blanketing everything. I hear only my heartbeat and my breath. Heat and moisture gather inside my muffler as I work. I feel deliciously invisible, as though my body has no edges.

By the time we finish, our neighbor has fired up their quad and is scraping their driveway clear.

Before I head inside, I pull my muffler down, take a few bright inhales of the cold morning air and think, how sad to live in such a gloriously snowy place and not love winter.

Do you hate winter? Do you dread its cold, searching fingers? Don't feel bad. I used to, as well. Until I ran some simple math and realized that if I continued to actively hate winter, then I'd spend half my life hating my life. In that moment, I decided to love winter. Let me show you how.

Let's start with something simple. (I did.) If you hate winter, light a beeswax candle.

OK, now, take some vitamin D. I don't know how much. Ask your doctor. If you really, really hate winter, maybe add some fish oil to your repertoire.

Put some flannel sheets on your bed in your favorite color.

Next, put a few drops of lemon essential oil in your drinking water.

Cue Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons." Or, hey, better yet, get tickets to the sym-

phony and listen live.

The next time you are at the grocery store, purchase some citrus: oranges, grapefruits, lemons. Take them home, wash them, pile them in a bowl on your countertop and enjoy their vibrant, gem-like colors. Now, eat one. As you peel your orange, let the juice run down your arms.

Inhale the sunshine locked inside them. Better, right?

Put the kettle on the stove. Steep your tea in a favorite mug. If tea is not your game, make some hot chocolate. Or if you are like me, just brew some coffee and enjoy its bold heat as it slides down your throat.

Borrow a trick I learned from my grandmother: early-day baking. Get your oven roaring at dawn and roast some winter squash. Bask in the residual heat.

If you are sinking under the weight of winter, go to the flower shop and breathe in the color, the aliveness of all those flowers and plants. Feast. Take a bouquet home with you to remember.

While you are out, swing by the library for some winter books. "Twelve Kinds of Ice" by Ellen Bryan Obed will delight

you. "The Long Winter" by Laura Ingalls Wilder will make you grateful for all that insulates you from the cold: grocery stores! propane! electricity! "Snowflake Bentley" by Jacqueline Briggs Martin will reignite your wonder for each snowflake that falls from the sky.

The final frontier to loving winter is getting outside. If you want to love winter, you must get outside and play every day. Bundle up from tip to toe and keep moving. Did you hear me? Do not stand still. You will freeze, and being cold is miserable. There is no getting around that ugly truth.

You have choices. You can snowshoe, cross-country ski, downhill ski, bike, run, hike, sled, skate. Does that seem too gear-intense? Too complicated? I understand. In that case, just go for a walk. The woods are particularly magical during winter.

But above all, keep moving. You must create your own heat; in winter and in your life.

Kelsi Turner writes, essays, children's books, YA novels and thank you notes. Visit her at KelsiTurner.com or on Facebook as Kelsi Turner.