



# Winter STATE OF MIND

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I USED TO BE THE FURTHEST THING FROM A WINTER PERSON. THEN A FEW YEARS AGO, LIFE CHANGED.

It's a fact that those who grew up with lake-effect snow are built differently. Born and raised in Duluth, I am one of them, and it may be a coincidence, but my resilience gained from Duluth winters has served me well. You get dumped on and you find a way to dig yourself out and carry on. I count myself among the survivors of the Halloween snowstorm of 1991. I count Duluth as a survivor of my winter driving. We have a good relationship now that I am not living there. The people born, raised and living in the Duluth area are special; you have to be. They have seen some shit.

Living in Minnesota, we have beautiful springs, summers and falls (give or take some occasional strange weather). Then there is winter ... People living in northern climates are in two buckets: those who embrace winter, and those who take a hard pass, preferring to hibernate until spring. The only things to seemingly bring the two groups together are the holidays and hockey.

I used to be the furthest thing from a winter person. Then a few years ago, life changed. I now require fresh air, outdoor activity, authentic connection and community. I am that person who jumps in lakes and frolics in the snow all winter long. It makes me feel more alive.

I hope this article makes you curious about trying new things ... perhaps a feeling that winter is a time to put the puzzle pieces of your life together or at least lay them out on the card table you have set up in the “spare room.”

As summer and autumn fly by in all their Minnesota glory, the leaves change color, then fall onto the streets, having fulfilled their duty. We feel the days get shorter as the chatter begins. What did the *Old Farmer's Almanac* predict? What do meteorologists say? What does my sister's roommate's cousin down the street think?

Does trying to predict the severity of winter matter? No. Winter is a state of mind.

In Minnesota, we have a touch of weather PTSD. Every aggressive winter storm steals a piece of our soul. So please excuse us if we get a bit jumpy and spend too much time talking about the weather.

Is it possible to come out of winter a better version of yourself? Yes.

Or a version of yourself that enjoys winter more? Yes.

All you need to do is make yourself a winter survival plan. Yes, I said SURVIVAL. OK, maybe it's not that serious. These days I embrace winter, and trust me when I say I dreaded winter for most of my life. I thought Duluth destroyed any chance of my ever enjoying winter. I was wrong!

*Here are some tips and suggestions.*

- Go outside any chance you get and walk. It will improve your mood. Get obsessed with your step count. For those who don't like winter, it's a huge middle finger to Mother Nature; the ultimate “you can't slow me down” vibe.
- Make lists ... of everything: home-related goals, professional, personal, whatever moves you. Divided into subcategories, please and thank you.
- Find an outdoor community. This is where I may lose some of you. Think about the local sauna club, run/walk group, snowshoeing, skiing, etc. Connection and community are essential to our success as human beings in every season of life.
- Dig deep: Take a look inside and pick something uncomfortable. Get curious about the dark corners of yourself you keep meaning to explore. This is where growth happens. You are worth it.
- Make a list of the people you think about way too much, considering you don't talk. The people you mean to reach out to and know it would make their day. They are waiting to hear from you.
- I initially wrote “reach out to someone you don't think wants to hear from you” as a bullet point. The thought of this task made me squirm around in my chair. Above all, you do you.

It's simple. Remember how curious we were as children? That wasn't supposed to stop. The more curious we are, the more we learn and the more we grow.

Take my suggestions with a flake of snow and remember we are all unique individuals. It all starts with getting curious.

Because it's worth saying again that winter is a state of mind. I want to feel like I am gaining momentum toward having such a strong sense of inner peace that it doesn't matter what season it is.

It also doesn't hurt to have a pre-planned trip to Florida ready in the event your mental state and/or the height of the snowbanks has become unmanageable. Minnesotans love Florida!

However you choose to approach winter, IT IS TIME. Get out the winter gear, sharpen those shovels, fill up the snowblower and do whatever you need to do. Because ready or not, she's coming!

Good luck to all.

**MAY THE WEATHER PATTERNS  
BE IN OUR FAVOR.**