

TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON

**BY KATHERINE
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This time of year, the thing I'm most grateful for is rest. As the holiday season wends its way into the busyness of my days, I'm grateful for friends and family, a house that I love, plenty to eat, and nearly always enough to pay the bills. But more than anything else, I offer my heartfelt thanks for time off during the holiday season.

I'm sure that sounds cynical, but this time of year always seems so busy, as if I'm running after myself trying to pick up where I left off, and I don't even know where that is. Is there some primordial part of my brain that still thinks I need to rush around storing food for the winter? Or is it the combination of get-it-done-before-winter-comes, getting ready for the holidays, and enjoying more social activities before it's too cold to go out?

Old Man Winter was in a hurry this year. The weather was not at all cooperative, so it feels as if everything has fallen behind. I never got all my leaves raked, and most of my Fall Projects have gone undone. As a relatively new homeowner, I'm

learning that I have to start my Summer Projects in March and my Fall Projects in June if I want to get them done on time.

I could learn something from the trees. They always seem to be on schedule. I read somewhere the reason trees change color in the fall is that they are withdrawing their sap from the leaves to rest for the winter. Odd as it seems, leaves are always yellow, red, and gold - it's just the green chlorophyll in the leaves that covers up the color in the spring and summer.

I think the trees are pretty smart. I'm ready to withdraw my sap myself! This time of year, I feel like an old bear wanting to hide in my cave and hibernate. Even the landscape seems to change its personality for the winter. The trees, bereft of their adornment of leaves and showing us the bones of the world, scratch tiny lace patterns into the sky with their branches. And the lake itself seems colder, more remote, its secrets even deeper and darker.

I think about how life might have been different a century or so ago. With only gas lamps, firelight, and moonlight to keep folks from bumping into things at

night, they probably went to bed not too long after dark. They may have risen with the sun, but in winter, that meant they'd have been getting around twelve hours of sleep a night! Even with dinner and after-dinner cleanup, they probably got nine or ten. And in the summer, maybe only eight, the current "norm." (You don't need so much rest in the summer anyway, because your body doesn't have to work to keep itself warm.)

Who makes up these "norms" anyway? I'd like to know. They never seem to fit me.

I think the longer nights are Nature's way of telling us to slow down, rest, maybe even sleep a little more, curl up inside, and show our true colors. I wonder sometimes if our society logs more violent acts, more depression, more stress in part because we're not sleeping as much as our ancestors did.

And maybe the cold is a signal to get a little closer to each other, be a little warmer with each other.

So be thankful that during the holiday season, you can get close to those you love. And take a nice nap after those Big Yummy Dinners. Happy Holidays!