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Winter Homeschool Encouragement

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One of the lifesavers of a homeschooling mom during the winter months is snow. When the days get long and the kids (and mom) get edgy, one of the most helpful solutions is fresh air -- a snowman or snow fort to build, snowball fights or sledding is just the thing.

What to do, then, when the weather doesn't cooperate? This year in our neck of the woods, the snow has been slow in coming. The winter temps have made it more desirable (and wise) to stay inside. Before you know it, attitudes (yours and theirs) have gone amuck, and tension reigns.

Even without the snow, homeschooling at this time of year has its challenges. It was fun in the fall with all the new books and the new schedule, a good change from the relaxed pace of summer. But with January comes the dreaded "cabin fever", and the feeling that this school year will never be over.

So now then, it's time to be creative. Here are some thoughts and ideas for curing some of the winter doldrums:

A Winter Walk - Now that the temperatures are getting milder, why not bundle everyone up and go for a walk. Make it more fun for your kids by using photography. How about getting them some disposable cameras and let them take a photo of whatever catches their eye? Have the pictures developed and let them make a collage or a journal page of their walk. Physical education, art and writing -- a package deal!

Field Trip! This is a great time of year to do a field trip. Pack up the kids and visit the Minnesota History Center (www.minnesotahistorycenter.org), the Minnesota Capitol (www.leg.mn.us), the Science Museum (www.smm.org) or something in your local area. Some of these venues offer discounts to homeschoolers. Do a little pre-planning and check it out.

Ice Skate - Does your area have an ice arena? If so, find out if they have open skate times. Do they rent skates? Some even have punch passes. This is a great way to burn off some of that cabin fever!

Call it a Day - We all need a change of pace, so for one day, take the day off. Be creative -- put blankets on the floor, pop some popcorn, do an all-family read aloud or watch a movie (educational or not). How about visiting a tropical destination through a travel movie . . .

Have a Cup of Tea - If you cannot break for a whole day, and the field trip or other ideas don't mesh, then do slow your day down a bit. If everyone, including Mom, needs an attitude adjustment, then it's time for a break. Whatever your kids enjoy doing, let them do it for 30 minutes (more or less). If they cannot get along, send everyone to their own private spot. You, Mom, grab a cup of tea, find a quiet spot of your own, rest a little and spend some time with the Lord in prayer. Yes, we do have time for this -- it will improve your day immensely. Ecclesiastes 4:6 says, "Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind." Spend some time in quietness.

Winter is for a short time in Minnesota, but it doesn't feel like it when we are in the midst of these cold, boring days. Press on, my dear friends! Lean on the Lord and trust that He will give you the strength you need to get through the remainder of this school year!

The Lord is my strength and my shield; in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults and with my song I give thanks to Him. --Psalm 28:7

By the way -- have you registered for MACHE's Annual Conference on April 18-20th? Do so today! This is one of the best ways to refresh yourself for your homeschool journey!

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