

# Make Room for Joy

It started to snow one morning this week. We're in an odd little pocket of Canada, caught between the ocean and the nearby mountains, so we actually don't get much snow here. For a couple of prairie kids like me and Brian, this is almost ridiculous.

We tend to have cold, drizzly, gray winters with occasional bits of snow. I don't miss -43 degrees Celsius of my childhood much—but I do miss snow forts and skating outside, the smell of wet wool mittens on the radiator and the blinding white crisp of winter sun. When it does snow here, it's a novelty, a joy to be enjoyed because it's fleeting and impermanent. (I can hear my Saskatchewan family laughing from here.)

The snow fell in the fat lazy flakes of barely freezing temperatures, the tinies crowded around the window breathing delight onto the panes of glass, and we were late for school. I'm a last-minute leaver, perpetually one of the last ones to drop off, no matter my best efforts, and of course we were running behind again this morning. I had my Mum Means Business voice out in full force: "Get your mittens, zip up your coat, come on, we're going to be late. Let's go, guys!" We do this every morning.

We tumbled out of the house in disarray and urgency. I had a long list of work for the day—don't we all? But then I saw the snow and I saw the looks on their faces, the longing to touch the snow and taste it, mingled with their resignation to the schedule as they headed for the grey minivan, lugging their backpacks along.

I stopped abruptly, without thought. "Go on then," I said. "Go on. We'll be late. Take a moment for this." They looked at me to make sure I meant it, disbelieving, and then they were off like a shot, falling into the two inches of snow on the lawn

like it was a drift from the Arctic.

Evelynn, our toddler, stood in the middle of the yard with her puffy arms straight out and her eyes closed, her mouth wide open. "I eat it!" she crowed. Anne and Joe rolled like puppies, tossed handfuls of snow at each other from a point-blank range. I wandered out of the garage and stood under the satisfying beauty of the morning and took a deep breath. Another. Another. Make some room to breathe deep. Exhale before you take in the day.

Make some room for the small joys. Make a little room in your schedule and your world-saving and your end-meeting, in the midst of your meal-planning, program-directing, list-accomplishing. Make some room for the moments, however fleeting, of beauty that breaks through our resolve and our armor, our urgency and our self-importance.

Stand here with me, out in the snow, for even just a few minutes. Listen to laughter and stand in space you created with your pause. Look at the trees stretched out bare and unshrinking.

Tip your face to the heavy sky until you feel like a woman in a poem; surely a poet could spare a word or two for the tired 30s of womanhood and the sacred discipline of pausing in the midst of the rushing, for the snowflakes and the joy to gather in your hair like fleeting stars.

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