

Berries, Bridges, and Snow Pants

I've just come in from a November morning walk with my son. We both shiver from the bright day to the dim glow inside our house. We both let out a sigh and flip onto the hats, mittens, and wool sweaters, our cheeks seem to become even rosier. Our normally curly hair looks as if it has been pressed with an iron, leaving only static behind. It is in these moments that I wish for the sun to shine again, just for a few minutes, so we can feel the warmth of the sun on our faces and the water of the rain on our hair. I have learned with the gift of time spent outdoors that the sun is not just a light source, but a source of life.

I am reminded that this gift is offered to us each day. In our family, most days we gratefully welcome the sun and rain, but on some days we are grateful for the sun and rain because it somehow seems easier to stay inside.

Just a few months ago, when the sun seemed to shine all day, it was hard not to be outside. The ponds were full of cool water, and the grass was full of life. The birds were chirping, even as the summer drew to a close.

now it is cold. The leaves have all fallen, morning birds are no longer outside, and the autumn is in full swing. when I think about the number of layers that will be needed to keep out the cold. Dressing myself is one thing, but dressing a toddler, as parents know, is another.

As I have begun to explore this season with my son I have rediscovered some old favorites. These are the things that I love to do in the winter. I love to see my son in his snow pants, yes, my snow pants. Long ago I upgraded to a sturdy pair and left the "fancy" at my former school behind. Now I happily don these snow pants for a different reason. I might take my son to a walk with a toddler and he will be wearing my snow pants. I can join my son kneeling on the cold ground while we toes steps into the water. I can sit on an log stone wall while we listen to the wind blow through the trees and see all the birds fly. Snow pants. Priceless.

As I was lying side by side with my son on a footbridge today in cold weather, the sun was shining over our heads while a blanket of crunchy brown leaves lay below us. I laughed away some leaves and we both shivered. I have had the pleasure of seeing my son in his snow pants. I have seen him in his snow pants when he was in the woods with children, he has more to do with off-roading. I have seen him in his snow pants when he was in the woods with children, he has more to do with off-roading.

On the way back to our car, we walked past a bush with bright red berries. In an otherwise drab landscape which are now in a vase in our home and remind me of the day. I have found myself wondering what that

development. As psychologist Dr. Reggie McNeal writes in her article *Why We're Losing the Scientific Perspective* (available at <http://thomsonline.com/2010/10/10/discovering-why-we-are-losing-the-scientific-perspective>):

Nature is one critical antidote to the increasing stress and anxiety that is being dropped on us in the educational system today. Lack of nature causes such a detrimental state to the brain and is so pervasive today we

As parents, we know that we do whatever it takes to try to eliminate the stresses in our children's lives. Given the above suggestion, one of the best ways to do this is to get outside. Wherever you live, you and the children in your life can experience the rewards of time outdoors. It is all at our front door. All we have to do is open it, take a step outside, and unwrap the gift of the outdoors.