

The wind was howling, the temperatures dropped, and I had to reassure myself that this is only temporary. I am not a winter person. I'm just not! I've tried to open my mind to the wonderful possibilities that winter brings – Thanksgiving with family, Christmas holidays with visions of sugarplums and powdery ski slopes! I've tried to remind myself how wonderful ice skating can be, how spending an early morning in a hunting blind is so relaxing, and how a glow of a campfire can make the world seem miles away! I have tried, but I am not presently succeeding in accepting winter just yet.

As the warm days get a little chilly and the breezy nights get downright cold, I have to remind myself of the benefits of dormancy and rest – just how necessary they really are. It's like a good night's sleep when a new mom has been awakened for several nights in a row. When she finally sleeps well, she awakens with a new appreciation for her life and her loved ones! The same is true for many of us who remain so caught up in the world that we sometimes forget to slow down and oftentimes don't allow the rest we need.

Most of us already know some of the effects that sleep deprivation can have on others. Who hasn't seen a driver slowly veer from side to side of their lane? "The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that fatigue is a cause in 100,000 auto crashes and 1550 crash-related deaths a year in the US." Several studies show that sleep loss and poor-quality sleep lead to accidents and injuries on the job, too.

Lack of sleep can also impair attention, alertness, concentration, reasoning, problem solving, and knowledge retention. It can also lead to serious health problems, putting you "at risk for heart disease, heart attack, heart failure, irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure, stroke or diabetes." Various sleep disorders have similar consequences. Insomnia is often related to depression. Lack of sleep could even be related to obesity. Several studies in the past have linked lack of sleep with an increased risk of death, impaired judgement, increased appetite, lack of sex drive, and even in the reduction of the human growth hormone that helps increase muscle mass, thicken skin and strengthen bones. None of those symptoms do I desire!

As this Thanksgiving week presents itself as such an opportunity for giving thanks, I must take advantage of the holiday. I must stop, enjoy and cherish each moment I am awarded, and hope that you will do the same.

I know I'm always stressing, "Plan, plan, plan"; so it's a little difficult for me to ask you this week to "rest, rest, rest", let yourself enjoy the season, but as always, "Be Safe Out There!"