



Quebec Association
for Adult Learning
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(QCGN)

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Adult Learner's Week
April 1-8, 2006

February Got You Down? Energize!!

It's at about this time of year that many of us find that we're less than energetic about a number of things. After all, no matter how much some of us might love winter, no matter how much we are all used to the snow, the ice, and those wintry blasts of arctic air, no matter how tough and how Canadian we all may be – face it, winter seems to feel terribly long by this time each year. And somehow even if that groundhog hasn't seen its shadow, we know that we still have weeks and weeks of winter left before spring arrives.

So, how do we combat those feelings of “blah”? How do some of us try to keep ourselves mentally “up” so that we can make it through the dreary part of winter? We energize.

For many this means physical activity: getting out on the slopes, going sledding, skating, cross country skiing, snow mobiling, going to the gym – what have you. However, even if you're not into sports or gyms, even if you can't take time off to go south, you can still activate your brain without too much fuss.

Whether you work alone or work for or with other adults, I have found several simple energizers that seem to have stood the test of time for me, at least. For the past 30 years I have employed various little exercises with adults that have helped us all regain the motivation that we have all felt diminishing over the winter months.

I'd like to share one of them with you.

It's called “50 Things I'd Like To Do Before I Die”(originally, it was “100 Things...”, but somehow it changed throughout the years). It is simple to do and somehow never fails to surprise and/or delight those involved.

This is how I go about it:

Using lined paper, number from 1-50. Taking no longer than 15-20 minutes (depending on your group or the amount of time you have available), start right in, listing the things you would like to do before you pass on (or over). They don't necessarily have to be in order of importance, but I would advise not erasing or crossing out. Go with the first things that occur to you, go with the outrageous and ridiculous – just GO for it! Write. Dream big and in Technicolor, dream bigger and better, dream that impossible dream...but don't forget those smaller ones.

An example of those smaller ones comes from my own experience. After a couple of years of seeing “learn how to belly dance” on my own list – and heaven only knows where that had come from – I finally broke down two years ago and took a class. I have been moving that belly ever since, draping myself in scarves, meeting new friends, and having SUCH fun ever since.

At the end of your allotted time, stop. It doesn't really matter if you haven't made it to 50, but it's better if you have pushed yourself to put as many items down as possible. If you really want to, you can share some of those entries, but many of us don't. Just keep the list at hand so that you can continue to add to it as other

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things occur to you – and believe me, other things certainly will. The energizing part of this exercise is in letting go, in dreaming extravagantly – because most of us never really indulge ourselves in dreams. And, strangely enough, once we do dream, we can actually put many of them into action.

So, give it a try, and see what happens. What's 15 minutes out of your life on a wintry day in February, anyway?

And if you want, get back to me with your thoughts on this and share your own energizers. I'd love to hear from you!

Enjoy the rest of the winter! Katharine Childs (childsk@ped.etsb.qc.ca)

Coming soon → QAAL's NEW Website...

Why not consider giving a contribution to the *QAAL Scholarship Fund* on behalf of an adult learner you know? It's easy to do – and is a thoughtful way of spreading the joy and celebrating the importance of lifelong learning. Just fill out the form below, enclose your check, and send it to us – we'll do the rest.

A gift of *membership in QAAL* is also a considerate gift for that special adult in your life. Use the form below today and that special someone will soon be receiving a membership pin, up-to-date information on our workshops and activities, and copies of our newsletter – all thanks to you!

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