

Why snow shoveling is a killer

Question: Why is snow shoveling considered particularly dangerous for persons with a history of, or a high risk for, heart disease? Can the potential dangers be reduced?

Aside from the simple hazards of frostbite and low back strains, snow shoveling can be deadly. During winter, news stories like this are common:

"Nine men from Cuyahoga County collapsed and died yesterday while clearing snow near their homes. The deaths brought to 13 the number of weather-related fatalities since frigid air and heavy snow slashed into northern Ohio Tuesday." (Cleveland Plain Dealer, December 1977)

The association between snow shoveling and heart attack or sudden death is no coincidence. Snow shoveling is an extremely strenuous activity, requiring seven to nine times the resting energy requirement for loads of 12 to 14 pounds.

For the person who is not physically fit and accustomed to strenuous activity, such an expenditure of energy may require maximal or supreme efforts.

THE STRAIN of snow shoveling is further aggravated by other factors. These include the reduced mechanical efficiency associated with upper extremity efforts, superimposed isometric (static) exercise, breath holding, inhalation of cold air and exposure to cold air.

fitness

Barry Franklin



These factors, singly and together, create a disproportionate heart rate and blood pressure response to effort. They drastically increase the demands of the heart for blood and oxygen.

In contrast to isotonic (rhythmic) exercise, isometric (non-rhythmic) straining — often in combination with breath holding — increases resistance to blood flow and restricts the amount of blood returned to the heart.

Finally, breathing cold air may set off a reflex spasm or temporary narrowing of the heart's own blood vessels (coronary arteries). When coronary circulation is already narrowed, these manifestations may lead to ischemia (lack of oxygen to the heart muscle), perhaps with chest pain and/or irregular and possibly dangerous heart rhythm disturbances.

HERE ARE SEVERAL general and specific recommendations:

1. Elderly persons, those with a history of heart disease and those with a high risk of heart disease simply should not shovel snow. Get someone to do it for you.
2. The older you are — particularly over age 40 — the more you need to pace yourself. Adopt an interval or work-rest approach.
3. Sudden strenuous exertion may result in excessive strain on the heart. Warm up by beginning to exercise gradually. It may be desirable to warm up indoors in some instances.
4. Lift small loads more often, rather than large loads.
5. Use a short shovel with a small scoop.
6. Wear a mask for cold weather or scarf to avoid inhaling cold air and to protect the face and neck from exposure.
7. Avoid large meals, coffee, tea, colas and other xanthine-containing beverages both before and after shoveling.
8. Abstain from alcohol and tobacco prior to shoveling and after shoveling.
9. Cut out and attach this label to your snow shovel: **WARNING: Use of this instrument for snow removal may be hazardous to your health.**

Belief in 'fate' can rob us of will to try

What is the role of destiny in human affairs? Do the tides of fate carry along without consulting us and without asking our leave?

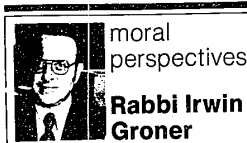
I meet people all the time who say, "Rabbi, I'm a born fatalist. I believe that what will be will be, and that when my number is up, I'll go."

I have come to believe that there are more fatalists in America than there are Republicans and Democrats. When challenged, these people cite incident after incident to support their belief.

I ONCE READ a story called "Why the Choir Was Late." One evening, in the town of Beatrice, Neb., a minister went to his church to get things ready for choir practice. He lit the furnace to take the chill off the church and went home to dinner.

The choir always arrived around 7:15, but at 7:10, when it was time for the minister to go back to the church with his wife and daughter, it turned out that his daughter's dress was soiled. They waited while his wife ironed another.

It also happened that all the members of the choir, for reasons trivial as "that of a soiled dress,"



moral perspectives

Rabbi Irwin Groner

a catnap, an unfinished letter, a geometry problem, a stalled car, were all late for their choir practice, something which had never happened before.

At 7:25, the church blew up. The furnace had exploded. Was this an act of God? Does this prove human destiny?

ALTHOUGH THIS feeling can be comforting and strengthening, it has a darker and more enervating aspect.

One of the most salient psychological facts of our

time is that almost universal feeling that we have lost control of our lives, our future, our destiny. Despite our breathtaking triumphs in space technology and incredible feats in the transplantation of human organs, we have been beset by a pervasive sense of impotence. We feel that while we have conquered other worlds, our world has eluded us, and conquered us.

When this sense of futility is taken to an extreme, when it crowds out every feeling of human possibility, it becomes noxious and dangerous. When a man conceives that he has lost control over his life, he has abdicated morally and spiritually.

From a psychological point of view and from a religious point of view, timidity is a worse sin than boldness. The assumption of one's utter inferiority is worse than that of obnoxious superiority.

THE MAN WHO acknowledges his helplessness has made himself helpless. It is a self-fulfilling and self-justifying diagnosis.

The coward who hides behind a slogan of "it is fate" has written his own prescription for failure.

The student who begins with the attitude that he has no control over his academic achievement will fail in his courses.

A man and a woman who take a detached view of their marriage, uncertain as to whether they will be joyful or miserable, who make no effort to control their future, are slated for unhappiness.

The businessman who forfeits all initiative because things are not under his control, has already declared his bankruptcy.

SOME TIME AGO, a young man beginning his career in the Coast Guard was suddenly called to take part in a desperate assignment — a terrible storm and a ship in distress. As the men began to move the big boat to go to the rescue, the young man, frightened by the assignment, cried out to the captain, "We will never get back."

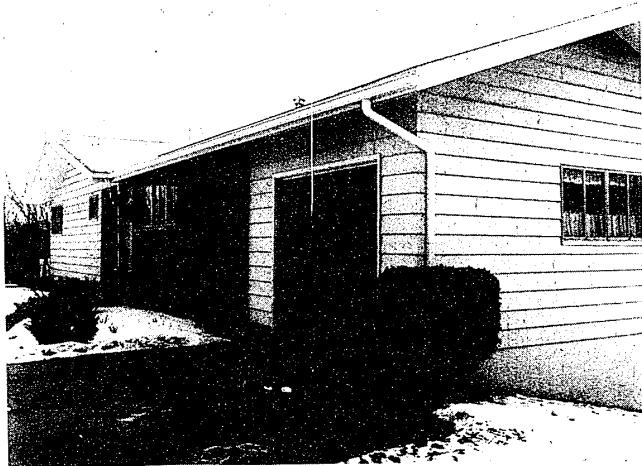
Above the storm the captain cried out, "We don't have to come back, but we do have to go out."

We will never know, in the complex rescue operation we call living, whether or not we shall "come back."

We have no way of knowing in advance exactly what will and what will not yield to our will and our effort. That is in the hands of a Power greater than ourselves.

But it is up to us whether we shall go out, and that is all that is really important. There is nothing shameful about the man who tries and fails. It is disgraceful to fail to try.

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