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Being a nudist is a lot of things: It's fun ... freeing ... fulfilling ... FANTASTIC! But nobody ever said it was easy.

If we want to be nude in our backyard, we must be sure our fence is high enough -- or our patio secluded enough -- that our neighbors won't be able to catch a shocking glimpse of our bare buns. If we want to be nude in our living room, we have to be certain to keep our "window shades all pulled completely down," as the song "Harper Valley PTA" says.

If we want to be naked in the company of others, we often must travel many miles to reach our favorite -- or the closest -- nudist park, resort or beach, and then pay for the privilege of hanging out (pardon the expression) with our undressed friends.

Then, of course, there's the matter of the weather. One of the first things my wife Joyce and I were told when we made our first visit to a nudist park was, "We're nudists, but we're not stupid. We put on clothes when it gets cold."

Our nudist park in Kansas, Prairie Haven, south of Topeka, is open from mid-April through October. At the end of one season, Prairie Haven's Facebook page said, "It's a sad time of year when our camp closes for the winter." It is indeed. But to my way of thinking, Prairie Haven is much closer to Paradise on an 85-degree day in July than it would be during an 8-inch snowfall in February.

A friend of ours at Kansas' Sandy Lane Club, near Hutchinson, is a brave man. He tries to spend time nude at Sandy Lane at least once EVERY month of the year. I admire his pluck, and I've tried to (sort of) emulate him by venturing naked out onto our patio at home on sunshiny winter days. Last winter was fairly mild in Kansas, and I was able to spend a little time out there each month.

But I'm not very courageous when it comes to cold, and I generally live by the personal code: "I'd rather be naked than clothed, but I'd rather be warm than naked."

The experts say Kansas has 221 sunshiny days each year, which keeps things bright and warmer than, say, Canada ... or even Nebraska. But there's still plenty of cold in Kansas, which means we Kansans who love to be naked also sometimes have to be inventive.

I depend on my electric blanket -- not just at bedtime but other times as well.

I do about a half-hour of stretches every evening and, as every nudist knows, EVERYTHING is better if you do it naked -- including exercising. So in winter, when I want to do my stretches in the nude, I spread the electric blanket on the living room carpet, turn up the heat, and use the toasty cover as my exercise mat.

It works great, and when exercise time is over, I can slip into my recliner and pull the warm blanket over my naked body. I'm telling you, "nice" doesn't describe how nice that feels!

But Kansas doesn't ever get as frigid as Michigan, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Manitoba and other northern states and provinces that are homes to AANR clubs. I applaud the intrepid folks who go nude in those places. I'll bet they all have electric blankets too!

I think that those who run nudist parks in that part of the world must be eternal optimists -- always looking on the sunny side of life -- because there certainly must be days when the only sunshine around is that found in their hearts and souls.

Is being nude worth the effort? For me, that's like asking if it's worth the effort to take my next breath or eat my next meal.

I have found that when I am nude it is like I have gained a sixth sense. I have a heightened awareness of everything: the warmth of the sun, the kiss of the breeze, the touch of a soft towel, even the sights and sounds around me.

I'll never forget the first time I went skinny-dipping in a crystal-clear pool at a nudist park -- as an older adult. It was a sensation like none I had ever experienced. Any nudist would know what I mean. I remember thinking, just after entering the water, "Why in the world did I wait so long to do this?"

Now, every time I step into a pool at Prairie Haven or some other park or resort, I'm thankful for the wonderful opportunity to be a nudist. I believe any nudist would understand that feeling too.

Since that first experience, Joyce and I have enjoyed many delightful days at Prairie Haven, visits to the iconic resorts Cypress Cove and Sunsport Gardens in Florida and Glen Eden in California and swimming nude in the Atlantic Ocean at Florida's Haulover and Blind Creek Beaches. And we plan to do lots more.

So, yes, for us, nudism is definitely worth the effort. In fact, when we consider how nudism benefits our bodies, soothes our minds and lifts our spirits, we realize that any effort we put forth to be nude is really no effort at all.

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