

KIDS AND WARMTH

For 25 years I was fortunate enough to make a career out of taking young people outside and so I want to share some of the thinking that has helped keep our son, Cai warm over the years; including a few winters in Alaska.

Why?

Since spending time in a Waldorf environment it has become increasingly apparent why keeping children warm affects far more than merely their comfort and happiness. Denver Waldorf School's own Adam Blanning has written a couple of great articles on the subject including:

http://www.denvertherapies.com/Why_does_Waldorf_education_talk_about_warmth_so_much.doc

Dr. Blanning suggests that:

- Being warm allows us to be “warmer”, more generous and caring people.
- Like dough, warmth encourages us to prove, grow and adopt new “flavor”.
- Ultimately, warmth is instrumental in the development of our children.



So how do we keep our kids warm?

There are two parts to the process:

1. Creating heat
2. Trapping it efficiently

Think of children in the same way you do a house. While an efficient and well

stocked boiler / stove is really important, ultimately, auditing energy loss is just as significant for comfortable (and sustainable) living.



Warmth encourages us to prove, grow and adopt new “flavor”



Even cold, wet days provide smiles if clothing is well chosen, food has fueled the fire and movement is part of the agenda.



Children inevitably immerse themselves in their environment - plan accordingly.



Cabin camping at -15° F and still smiling

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Firstly, just like kindling is used to start a fire, well split logs to generate heat and big logs to keep a fire going over night, think of food in the same way. Sugars will give an instant burst but flare up and burn out just as quickly. Carbohydrates provide a well balanced flow of heat and always remember the fats when you want to keep the fire going throughout the day.

Clothes do not heat bodies, they purely maintain warmth, so it is important to use movement to generate heat. Playing games that encourage children to move are especially necessary when the child is acting lethargically due to cold.

Most heat is lost through the head, decent hats are imperative. (We have always had good luck with hoods ensuring something at hand to prevent escaping heat before it becomes a problem.)

Go potty before going out! Heating up fluids inside your body is wasted energy. It is much better to have warm fingers and toes, even though this heat will be lost more quickly.

Evaporation is a major cause of heat loss, so staying dry is a huge factor in keeping warm. For adults sweat is a major culprit and it is often a good idea to layer down. For children dampness is more likely due to rolling in snow or not pulling a zipper up. Being vigilant about providing well fitting clothes that wick moisture from the body and a fully waterproof layer, will go a long way towards maintaining heat. Layer kids up.

Outdoor enthusiasts will cite that "cotton kills", it sounds melodramatic, but cotton as a skin layer in winter is to be avoided as it does not dry easily and causes major evaporative heat loss.

Layering really is key. Wool & silk (best) or synthetic layers next to the skin, with a number of other wool or synthetic insulation layers topped by a waterproof shell are worth the investment.

Top 6 things to keep kids warm

1. Wool or silk skin layers
2. Fully waterproof outer layer
3. Warm, well fitting hat
4. Fully waterproof gloves
5. A well thought out layering system
6. Plenty of food including complex carbohydrates & fats

FINAL THOUGHTS

Taking Cai out in the wilderness in pretty horrible conditions have been some of my most rewarding moments as a parent. Working out layering systems that allow him to be comfortably bundled has meant he has enjoyed them too. What works out in the mountains also makes city and school life much more fun. At the heart of the system is lots of layers, wool next to the skin and a fully waterproof shell. Have fun out there and feel free to ask me questions!

Wil Rickards

SOME RESOURCES: (THANKS KIMBERLY)

Great wool layers & puddle pants:
http://www.atoygarden.com/?fhttp://www.atoygarden.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=category.display&category_ID=4

More woolens:
<http://www.novanatural.com/woolens>

Outer wear:
<http://www.rei.com/outlet/category/22000006>

<http://www.sierratradingpost.com/s/children/>

Our favorite boots:

<http://www.bogsfootwear.com/shop/index.html>

Keep an eye on:

<http://theclymb.com>
<http://leftlanesports.com>

We will happily give you intros to these sites as they give us tokens when our friends buy ©

Local consignment stores:

<http://denver.cbslocal.com/top-lists/best-kids-consignment-stores/>

Kimberly's favorite:

<http://www.bearlywornconsignment.com/>

Miscellaneous:

A wonderful emporium:
<https://secure.armysurplusforless.com/>

and of course:

<http://denver.craigslist.org/>