

It's Not Cold; It's Just Inadequate Clothing!

How to Survive the Winter as a Sidewalk Counselor or Prayer Supporter

by Debra Braun, Education and Counseling Director

For those of you who are new to sidewalk counseling or praying outside abortion centers, the following tips might be helpful. In case you're wondering if the abortion centers ever close in the winter, here's your answer: I've been sidewalk counseling in Minnesota since 1986. In all that time, I can recall once that they closed because of the winter weather -- the day after the 1991 Halloween blizzard when we received about 30 inches of snow. So, if the abortion centers are open for killing in bad weather and the abortion clients can get there, our goal is to be there also to try to save those innocent children. We are also a particularly strong witness in the winter. Someone once took literature from me on a cold day, saying, "If you're out here today, you must have something important to say." Indeed, our presence in the winter tells all those around us that this is SERIOUS, this is a matter of life and death, these children are WORTH IT!

The following tips will help you fulfill your scheduled sidewalk counseling/prayer times and help you focus on the women and not on your own discomfort.

- * Listen to the weather forecast before going out. Everything makes a difference -- the temperature, the wind chill, whether it's going to be sunny or overcast, etc. I even pay attention to the direction of the wind. Depending upon which side of the building I will be standing on, this makes a difference.
- * Dress in layers. The air between the layers helps keep you warm.
- * Wear a hat or hood, and keep your neck covered. (A large percentage of your body heat escapes through your head.) But, please, no ski masks! We want to be very approachable to the pregnant women, not scare them away.
- * The first few times you go out in the winter, dress more warmly than you think you have to. You'll be glad you did!
- * Some people use disposable hand warmers for their hands and feet. Since I like to wear gloves rather than mittens for ease in handling the literature, I don't use hand warmers. Instead, I keep my hands warm by alternating them in my coat pockets (one hand is holding the literature, ready to be distributed, while the other is keeping warm in the pocket).
- * A good place to shop for boots and other cold weather gear is a sporting goods store. (On a related note, a good place to shop for a nice big umbrella is a golf store.)
- * Avoid caffeine; it constricts blood vessels which reduces circulation and allows the cold to seep in. Hot soup is better, which gives nourishment and spurs digestive activity. This helps your internal body temperature to rise.
- * Keep moving. An observer watching me from inside could probably tell how cold it is by the speed of my pacing back and forth!
- * If it's an extremely cold (sub-zero) and/or windy day, consider parking your car nearby where you have a good view of the entrance to the abortion center. During the lulls between clients, you can warm up in your car or take turns being on the sidewalk with your sidewalk counseling partner.
- * Be prudent; take a break when needed so that you don't get hypothermia.

Taking these measures will allow you to not only endure the winter, but on most days, to actually be quite comfortable in the cold. Something that helps me when I'm preparing to go out on bitterly cold mornings is to think of specific children saved because of sidewalk counseling. We are enduring this suffering because of them and their families and out of obedience to our Lord. Think of the suffering He endured for us! And recall to mind the words of St. Paul: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of His body, which is the church." (Col. 1:24)

It can be a challenge to maintain your pro-life presence outside the abortion centers throughout the winter. With God's grace and adequate clothing, YOU CAN DO IT!



PRO-LIFE ACTION MINISTRIES

Stopping Abortion -- One Life at a Time

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