How to Survive a Blizzard

Brian Kunz | Deputy Director, Outdoor Programs

Kunz knows how to handle extreme winter weather conditions. For more than two decades he has led some of Dartmouth’s most adventurous undergrads on the DOC’s Quebec Mountain adventure. The 10-day expedition, held annually during spring break, includes skiing, snowshoeing and camping in the Groulx Mountains of northern Quebec, where temperatures regularly drop to -36 degrees Fahrenheit. Earlier in his career Kunz traversed the entire country of Norway from south to north on skis—a route roughly equivalent to the distance between Florida and Maine. Without proper training, a cold-weather outing can quickly turn into a life-threatening situation, so Kunz recommends the following tips to prepare for your next winter adventure.

THINK AHEAD
The first steps of any successful winter outing are taken before you head outside. Kunz recommends checking the weather forecast and dressing for the worst possible weather conditions: “Footwear is especially difficult because you cannot have your feet freeze or get injured. Protect your feet from moisture, slush, rain and snow. One type of footwear is not going to take you through an entire 24-hour experience, no matter where you are.” You’ll also want to bring a sharp and sturdy knife, basic first aid kit, and a map and compass.

FIND SHELTER
“Weather forecasting is not a precise science,” warns Kunz. “Should you run into trouble, assess whether you can navigate to shelter, a road or a cellphone connection, but don’t overwork to get out and don’t panic. Traveling in deep snow without skis or snowshoes is exhausting. Walking on frozen ground, firm snow crust or ice is treacherous, and you don’t want to fall and injure yourself.” Kunz suggests packing a plastic or nylon tarp to use as an emergency shelter from snowy conditions.

STAY DRY
One of the most critical skills for surviving severe winter weather is protecting yourself from moisture as the temperature drops. Depending on the severity of the situation, hypothermia can start to set in within minutes. “Conservate energy and don’t work up a sweat that will dampen your clothes and reduce their insulative properties,” advises Kunz. “Keep yourself from being soaked. Your core temperature can drop if your torso gets wet, so get out of desperate conditions.”

FOCUS
After you locate a safe, dry shelter, focus on meeting your body’s most basic needs: water and warmth. Kunz recommends carrying protected matches. “Assess what resources you have with you and figure out how to use those resources to keep yourself warm and comfortable,” he says. “Ideally you’ll have a small container made of metal that you can melt snow in and warm water. Try to stay hydrated. You can get by for three weeks without eating.” Most importantly, Kunz adds, “keep a positive attitude and never give up.”

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Percentage of Tuck’s class of 2018 who are women, a new high

Quote/Unquote
“He needs to recognize that his election coincides with a peak of the labor market, and things are only going to get more challenging.”
—economics professor Andrew Samwick in a November 9 blog post titled “Five Suggestions for the President-Elect”

Eureka!

Mental Temptation
Brain is a key to dieting success.

>> Having trouble losing weight? The hardwiring of your brain might be to blame, suggests a new study in the journal Cognitive Neuroscience. A team of researchers in psychological and brain sciences professor Todd Heatherton’s lab examined the reactions of 36 chronic dieters to various food cues using functional magnetic resonance imaging and diffusion tensor imaging. The team, led by grad student Pin-Hao Chen, Adv’16, found that the research subjects with lower body-fat percentages had stronger neural pathways between the executive control and reward systems of their brains. Individuals who have weaker pathways, the study concludes, “may have difficulty in overriding rewarding temptations, leading to a greater chance of becoming obese than those with higher structural integrity.” The authors state that further longitudinal research is needed into the effects of repetitive dieting on brain structure and on an individual’s ability to maintain a healthy body weight.

Friends with Benefits
Pals impact academic success.

>> The friendship networks of college students can have a significant effect on academic achievement, reports associate professor of psychology Janice McCabe in the journal Contexts. After interviewing a diverse group of undergraduates at a public university in the Midwest, McCabe mapped each student’s web of relationships and discovered that the structures of their social networks tend to fall into three basic categories: “tight-knitters” have a single, dense group of friends who are all familiar with one another; “compartmentalizers” have two to four unrelated clusters of friends; and “samplers” prefer one-on-one relationships with individuals who are otherwise unconnected. These network types can impact student performance. “At a time when only 40 percent of students graduate from four-year colleges within four years,” writes McCabe, “we need to better understand how friends can either pull students up academically or bring them down.”