

One certainty of winters in Iowa is that we will always have a week (or two!) of sub-zero temperatures, and this winter has been no exception. What has been unique about the past two months has been the uncertainty amid all the changes that we see every time we look at the news or social media. These uncertainties can cause us to fear that we will not be able to continue doing what matters most to us. My response to the barrage of news and undercurrent of confusion is to stay focused on what's important—to the INI community, to the UI community, to the scientific community. External developments should have no bearing on our core values and commitments, and they make it even more important for us to focus on building our collaborative and supportive community.

Focused, calming activities like the centering practices and the Mood Check that we are familiar with give our bodies and minds a break. It doesn't mean we are giving up. It only means we acknowledge that our bodies and brains can't function on high alert all the time. Everyone finds peace in different ways, and I encourage you to protect time in your daily and weekly life for whatever brings you joy and calm. If fine art is a creative outlet for you, consider sharing your work in the College of Medicine's upcoming [Health Science Campus Art Show](#).

I find that reading poetry aloud allows me to slow down, shut out the noise, and focus on the music of the language on the page. Some of my favorite poems offer clarity to the complexities that surround me, while others resist easy interpretation, content to let the mystery be.

Last month, I shared "[The Waking](#)" by Theodore Roethke with those who attended our Lunch with INI Directors. This poem has grounded me since I first encountered it as a high school student, when I thought I would become a poet. I return to it often to remind myself: "I learn by going where I have to go." Try reading it aloud. Don't worry about what the words mean; let the sounds wash over you.

The Waking

[Theodore Roethke](#)

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.
I learn by going where I have to go.

We think by feeling. What is there to know?
I hear my being dance from ear to ear.
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Of those so close beside me, which are you?
God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there,
And learn by going where I have to go.

Light takes the Tree; but who can tell us how?
The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair;
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Great Nature has another thing to do
To you and me; so take the lively air,
And, lovely, learn by going where to go.

This shaking keeps me steady. I should know.
What falls away is always. And is near.
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I learn by going where I have to go.

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