



The Energy of Spring

SEIZE THE SEASON TO MAKE CLEAR CHOICES AND LEAP INTO COMMITTED ACTION

By CAT THOMPSON

Ah, spring is right around the corner. The long, gray winter is coming to a close. There may even be leaf buds and spring flowers where you live. Clearing the gutters, starting the garden, weeding out coat closets — spring is about taking action after winter’s hibernation. But don’t just fling yourself into domestic spring-cleaning projects: Take some time to consider how you can best harness the enthusiasm and clarity you feel now in order to create real, lasting changes in your life.

SEASONAL ADJUSTMENTS

Before you can tap into spring’s potential for new growth, it helps to understand that each season has its own intrinsic energy. By observing what’s going on in nature throughout the year, you can better harness the energy of each season.

Tribal cultures that live close to the earth generally understand the seasons because life is built around them. In our Western culture, however, we’ve built structures to insulate ourselves from the seasons. These structures aren’t just the houses in which we live, they’re also the routines we establish. No matter whether the weather is inclement or the sun is begging us to take a play day — we get up, go to work and behave much the same way, day in, day out, season to season.

For the most part, these structures serve us well. We can stay productive all year long; we no longer have to save food in winter, hoping to scrimp by until spring. But even in these high-tech times, it pays to notice what nature is doing. After all, our bodies are part of nature. We can never completely escape the changing influences of the seasons. And why should we when we can use them to improve the quality of our lives?

Perhaps you have a project that never seems to get done, or you are constantly fatigued. Or maybe you’d like to make a change, but it never seems like the right time. Instead of attempting these things month in and month out without success, try looking at what’s happening outside your window. You’ll find that some seasons are better than others for dreaming up ideas, others are better for starting them, and still others are best for letting go. You can learn to use the cyclical energy of the seasons to help you develop, grow and change.

A YEARLY PLAN

How exactly do the seasons differ from and support each other? Consider this quick overview.

Fall is the start of nature’s yearly cycle. Once all of the resources from summer’s long growing season are harvested and distributed, the earth becomes empty and still. There is a sense of empty space waiting to be filled. It may also feel like a time of grief, or a time of “not enough,” or of being compelled to let go before we feel ready.

Animals and plants carefully allocate their resources so that they will last through winter and spring and into summer. Because our bodies are part of nature, we too should be judicious about our energy resources. Fall is the time to ask: How can I best sustain myself through the winter? It is not, however, a time for hoarding or for scarcity mentalities. In fact, autumn may be accompanied by a strong desire to clear out your physical and emotional space. It is a good time to

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experience letting go of unnecessary burdens and energy drains. All this work helps create the space for winter dreams.

Wintertime is all about dreaming and imagination.

During the winter months, dim days and long nights encourage hours of introspection. This is the perfect time to imagine all kinds of new possibilities. How might it feel to change jobs? To start a new relationship? To stand up for yourself? How would it feel to be really healthy? To become a vegetarian? To take six months off and travel the world?

The energy of dreaming is essential because it inspires us: It gives us a range of new, exciting options from

which we can choose.

Winter is also a time of creativity. Native cultures spent these dark months telling stories, weaving, sewing and beading. If we were in tune with the season, we would set up our winter routines to allow for free time to daydream, make art and create new visions.

Without an energizing vision, we are likely to become bored with our lives. Once we get stuck in a rut, our passionate emotional energy dwindles away. Winter is where we review our options, examine our fears and explore potential choices.

That brings us to spring. Spring is a time for making choices and taking inspired action. It is about establishing commitments and leaping forth — feeling full with the drive to start new projects and draw clear boundaries.

Having taken winter to imagine all the possibilities, we are now called upon to choose a path that excites us. Spring helps us build up speed and pressure; it's our job to direct that energy toward what will ultimately bring us to joy and

fulfillment. It's a time of fierce independence and "pioneering" energy, a time when we are called to cast off the superfluous, to break away from the pack and go for the goal.

Failing to commit to a clear, energizing path at this point can cause us to start feeling angry, frustrated and resentful. When you are in the grip of this energy, outside obstacles and interference can also feel more frustrating than usual, and you may find yourself feeling more aggressive and determined about busting through them, particularly as you sense that your goal is within reach.

Summer is the season of satisfaction, fulfillment and celebration — where all the space-clearing, option-exploring and choice-making of previous seasons comes to fruition.

Traditionally, people worked hard all spring, planting and building. In the summer, they were able to relax a bit as some crops bore fruit and others grew. With warmth and food so available, summer is a natural time for sharing, community and playing. The exuberance and enthusiasm of the season can be intoxicating.

Because summer is the season where the energetic work of previous seasons pays off, it often feels like there is plenty

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of everything. It's easy to get carried away with this feeling, though. If you start big projects in the summer, full of this spirit of abundance, you may find those commitments difficult to maintain throughout the year. That's because this kind of energy may not be available year round. Instead of starting lots of new projects in the summer, focus on enjoying the fruits of your labor, celebrating your successes and basking in the abundance that's resulted from commitments you made in the spring.

SPRING FORWARD

So how can you best take advantage of spring's boundless energy? Sometimes "spring fever" fills you with such vigor that you don't know what to do with yourself. This is a great time to begin new and challenging workouts. Training for a marathon, adding a martial arts class, working out at the climbing gym — you may be drawn to endeavors that help you to become stronger, more disciplined and more focused.

But before you launch yourself into any action plan, pause to consider whether this investment is the very →



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best use of your energy — whether it is in the service of your highest vision, or merely one of several OK options.

EXAMINATION TIME

Here are some questions to ask yourself to make sure you are getting the most out of your spring action plan:

Are you genuinely excited and energized by the actions you're getting ready to take? If so, that's your body's way of saying "yes!" If not, that's your body's way of saying it's not convinced. Do some more probing until you hit on a goal-oriented plan you can hardly wait to start.

Do you know what your ideal outcome is? If you're not absolutely clear where you're going, it may be challenging to keep yourself focused. Write down in as much detail as possible your desired end point. Then picture it, feel it, taste it and revel in it. The more vividly you can visualize it, the faster your outcome will materialize. This kind of exercise can save you months of hard work.

Are you prepared to champion the plan you have created?

Almost inevitably, your commitment to your goal will be tested more than once. The good news: Spring energy is great for overcoming obstacles, and it can give us the courage to speak out or dig in on behalf of our own highest choices. Think of a little tree sprout coming out of the ground, fighting its way through layers of dark earth in order to reach the light. That's you — and if your intent is clear and your commitment firm, you'll make it!

If you are excited by your action plan and know your desired outcome but are still having trouble staying focused, consider your boundaries. If you have weak or inconsistent boundaries with others, your energy may be "leaking," causing you to run out of steam partway down your path. Use the forceful, clear energy of spring to help you say no to requests that do not fully energize you, and to recommit to your path should you ever find yourself derailed by others' priorities (for more on that, see "What's on Your Plate?" sidebar).

CHOOSING CHANGE

Expanding into new areas of physical and emotional space in the spring helps you live better all year round. So when you step outside this month and fill your lungs with the first heady aromas of new life, let nature inspire you. Point your energy in the direction of all the sweetness and satisfaction that is waiting for you — and then go! ●

WHAT'S ON YOUR PLATE?

Do you find yourself deluged with invitations, commitments and requests for help? Do they often interfere with your own priorities? Consider trying this trick I use to help me set and keep clear boundaries:

- I have a beautiful china plate where I post sticky notes labeled with my major priorities. When someone asks me for my time, I see how full my plate is, literally, and then check in about what the request will require, and what other commitments it might displace.
- I ask myself: Will saying yes to this request distract me or cost me energy, or will it feed me and help me fulfill my goals? If it is a distraction, I simply say, "Sorry, my plate is really full at the moment. I'll get back to you when it's a bit more open."
- If you are worried that others will perceive you as selfish, practice the art of direct language: Simply say, "I have a couple of priorities that I am extremely excited about right now, and I've committed my schedule to them until they're completed." You don't have to apologize for keeping your time and energy to yourself when you're on an inspired mission!

Cat Thompson writes and teaches a variety of workshops on self-mastery, emotional dynamics and personal evolution. Learn more at www.emotionaltechnologies.com.



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