

Energy of the Seasons

Seasonal cycles provide a wonderful example of the constant flow and movement of change in life. Chinese medicine and philosophy describe these continual cycles as different kinds of energy moving and transitioning from one state or quality to another. Exploring seasonal transitions is a very practical and direct way to understand these fundamental processes of life changes.

Weather and climate are obvious variables as seasons transition. Summer heat changes to fall coolness that changes to winter cold that changes to spring warmth. Depending on location, there are similar shifts in moisture, wind and humidity. Chinese concepts expand from these basic observations, describing energetic qualities and associations.

For example, seasonal energy transitions may be described as summer's *outward exuberance* transitions to fall *inward turning* transitions to winter *stillness* transitions to spring *budding new growth* which then continues the cycle by nourishing summer's exuberance.

These Chinese energetic ideas have been developed over centuries, including many different aspects. For example, there are internal organ correspondences to the seasons: summer - heart; fall - lungs; winter - kidneys; spring - liver. Each of these organs reflect similar energy as the season, and like the seasons, energy moves from one organ to another.

The energetic correspondences continue to colors, foods, emotions, planets, herbs... the list is quite long.

As we are now approaching the end of summer, let's take a look at the seasonal qualities of fall.

Fall - Inward Turning

After summer's outward exuberance there is a natural transition in the other, balancing, direction: inward turning. The days gradually become a little shorter in sunlight, cooler in temperature. Our activities are influenced, coming home and inside earlier than before. These gradual changes show up in little, everyday things like taking along a sweater or light jacket, or staying closer to home.

Meals also gradually shift, reflecting the changes in the garden. As the summer fruits and vegetables die back, the fall root vegetables become prominent. The spring and early summer plants & flowers are fading, composting back into the earth: inward turning.



What we see occurring around us, in the external world, is also happening in the internal world. From the fiery exuberance of summer and heart, fall brings the metal qualities of the lungs. These elements, fire and metal, are symbolic, reflective of an energy phase/state. Fire: expansive, exuberant, outward, flaring, active. Metal: condensing, compressing, compacting & inward moving. As the active exuberance of heart/fire peaks, the fading from that peak naturally begins an inwardly, condensing movement.

Fall Energies

The traditional associations with the fall seasons are: lungs/large intestine; the color white; metal element; positive emotions of courage and integrity; negative emotions of grief and sadness; planet Venus; the white tiger. Each of these share in the similar energy of metal: *inward turning*.

Another way to describe the underlying energy of fall/lungs/metal is "letting come, letting go." We see this in the physical function of the lungs: breath comes, breath goes; inhale, exhale. Balance, harmony. Tension or holding around either inhale or exhale leads to imbalance and, sometimes, dis-ease - not at ease. Letting

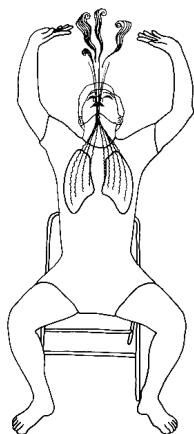
go of summer energy, fun, warmth, travel, vacation allows a letting come in of the natural bounty or harvest of fall.

This energy of letting come, letting go isn't restricted to the fall season or the lungs. These are the dominant places or phases where that energy expresses itself.

Solstice & Equinox

Each solstice and equinox can be a reminder to recognize a seasonal transition. We don't have to do a lot, just be aware of the natural cycles occurring all around and within us. Taking a moment to pause, notice, allows a very natural internal process to harmonize our inner being with our outer world.

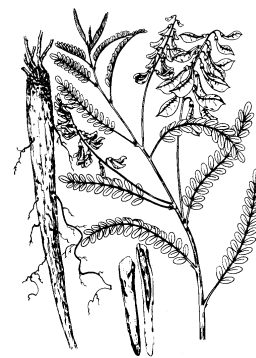
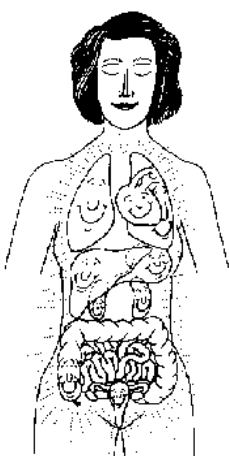
Most cultures have some tradition around seasonal transitions, for example: a harvest festival in fall. While the specific details of each cultural approach may be different, the underlying process is very similar: bring awareness to this transition.



There are many ways to do this. For example, in Chinese meditation, techniques like the lung healing sound, or the inner smile, may be useful in harmonizing the inner energy of the lungs with the outer energy of the environment/season. The moving practice of tai chi is another way to do the same thing. The grounding and rootedness of iron shirt, standing chi kung, strengthens the physical and structural connection with the ground, the Earth, which naturally connects us to the current energetic moment of the season. A new series of these meditation classes will begin in September with the six healing sounds. There will also be a Fall Equinox meditation gathering on Sept. 21st.

There are also foods and Chinese herbs that may be supportive in bringing balance to body, mind and spirit around seasonal changes.

It is within this harmony of inner and outer, seasons and organs, that the fundamental goal of Chinese medicine moves toward: balance. Harmony with seasonal transitions allows this balance to naturally appear in all aspects of our lives: foods, emotions, activities, exercise, herbs, sleep. The lack of harmony with these energetic transitions also leads to an imbalance in the same areas of our lives.



The calendar may change at the first of the month and January 1st. The energy of the year cycles through the seasons and the moon phases. Being aware of these energetic changes naturally keeps us in tune, aligned, in harmony with ongoing cycles of change that flow through our environment, our bodies and our lives.