

Disclaimer

To the best of my knowledge, the principles offered in the Four Seasons System are not in opposition to any religion, they are not intended to be dogmatic in nature, nor are they designed to create or support any form of cultist doctrine. I have seasoned my own conclusions and understandings of ancient Chinese philosophy, the Law of the Five Elements, and the Law of the Four Seasons with my personal interpretations of biblical scriptures and twenty-eight years of practice studying the cause of stress, tension, and pain. In the later years I have incorporated some of the teachings of today's masters, such as Eckhart Tolle, Byron Katie, Dr. Scott Peck, Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, and Don Miguel Ruiz.

The Four Seasons System is highly adaptable and applicable to people from all walks of life, independent of religion, race, sex, age, profession, or education level.

When reading this book, do not make the mistake of focusing on what's wrong with your friends and loved ones. It is always easier to see flaws in others than in yourself. It is my sincere hope that you will use this material to take charge and responsibility for your own life. Look inside, not outside, yourself for the answers.

All the case histories given in this book are true stories told to the best of my recollection. Except for the cases where the patients have given permission for me to use their real names and ages, all names, ages, and circumstances have been changed to protect the identities of the individuals.

Any person reading this book who has a medical condition, or suspects that they have one, should always consult their licensed physician regarding the proper way to treat this condition.

Introduction

Life is an ongoing cycle of change. Whether you're ready for it or not, the sun will rise tomorrow morning and set tomorrow evening. The same thing will happen the following day, and on and on. As the days pass, spring will shift into summer, and then summer will shift to fall. Earth spins and rotates, and as long as you're here on earth, it's going to take you with it. No one can stop this ongoing cycle; it is a fact of life.

The very definition of life is something that is alive; the continuum from birth, or germination, until death. To be truly alive is to be on a continuous journey of learning and growth that passes in cycles intrinsically linked to the cycle of life we see all around us in the natural world. Everything that is alive is growing. To grow, we have to be challenged, put to the test, and go outside our comfort zones. Life is therefore a continuum of lessons to learn or problems to solve.

Situations change. We encounter problems. These are as inevitable as the sun rising. Resistance to challenges and avoidance of problems leads to a stagnation of growth, which causes us pain and suffering. If we experience ongoing problems, pain, and suffering in our lives, it may seem like the world is spinning out of control. But for ages, we've seen the sun come and go; the cycle continues with or without us. We can resist change all we want, but if we continue to resist, we become miserable, miss unlimited opportunities to grow, improve and start fresh. A wise man or woman will welcome challenges and problems as opportunities for growth. Once we accept our challenges and problems, and learn to live in harmony with the cycle of our lives, our suffering will be gone. Once we accept the problem, it ceases to be a problem; it becomes an opportunity to learn and grow.

When we are young, we are typically more idealistic and full of dreams, passion, and life. As we get older, many people lose their dreams and passion for life. They find themselves stuck or in a crisis, filled with disappointments, suffering, and pain. Anyone who has lived a little has discovered that life does not always turn out the way we wanted or expected. Do you know how you got to where you are? Do you know what you need and how to get it? Are you still growing? Do you know what is alive in you? When you reflect on your life up to this point, do you feel as if you are a success or a failure? Are you still excited about life? Are you learning and growing? Are you alive and fulfilled in your relationships? Are you engaged with and enjoying your work? Are you healthy and fit? Do you have peace of mind? Don't worry if you can't answer all of these questions positively right now. Every patient I have ever met has issues in life that challenge him or her. By repeating an erroneous behavior, avoiding growth, or ignoring our problems, we bring pain and suffering on ourselves and carry the tension somewhere in our bodies and minds. This tension leads to injury or disease ("dis-ease") and affects the quality of our lives.

What's most important is that you realize you did not end up where you are for no reason. When we were young, it seemed as if we healed and bounced back from injuries and pain in no time. As we get older, the same types of injuries linger or reappear. Why is that? I firmly believe in cause and effect, or, "As you sow, so also shall you reap." Every action, or lack of action, has a reaction and consequences.

Your potential for health, well-being, performance, and happiness is in your own hands. This goes against popular thinking. In our modern society, it's common to blame someone or something other than ourselves for our pain and failures. As we stubbornly refuse to grow and to take responsibility for our reality, we are unable to learn the lessons life teaches us. The lessons or life problems do not go away. As we resist, more and more tension builds up, causing anxiety, depression, and pain. If you keep doing what you have been doing you will keep getting what you have been getting. When we are unable to see this for ourselves, we keep doing what we have always been doing, and wondering why we are still in pain or unhappy. Albert Einstein once said, "The definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing over and over while expecting a different outcome." We can all read this quote and nod our heads in agreement, but it's ironic that we continue the same ineffective patterns in our own lives, over and over. No one has pain or an injury for no reason! The same is true for failure and unhappiness with life.

Cause and effect exist in everything. If an injury does not heal, there must be a continuous stressor present. Stress picks at the scab, and the wound - emotional or physical - will never heal. Most people don't see the big picture or the cause, because they focus too much on relieving the symptom. If we are depressed, we are taught to take antidepressant drugs. If we have heartburn or acid reflux, the TV commercials have conditioned us to take antacid medication to reduce the acid. If we have pain, we are told to take over-the-counter ibuprofen or stronger prescription painkillers. These are standard practices. However, when the warning light on your dashboard that indicates you are low on fuel goes on, you do not solve the problem by covering it with duct tape. Anxiety, depression, heartburn, tension, inflammation, and pain are all warning lights indicating something is wrong. Not one case of back pain is due to a deficiency of ibuprofen in the body. Ibuprofen is an anti-inflammatory drug that removes or reduces inflammation but not its cause. If the cause is still there, the drug will only mask the symptoms, and prolonged use of these band-aid treatments can have side effects, including other injuries or even more pain. We have been conditioned to treat the symptom, injury, or the disease rather than the cause.

Why aren't more studies done to understand what healthy people do to stay healthy? Why don't we focus on strengthening the immune system rather than treating the disease? Why is it that two people can be in the same car accident, where one person is severely injured while the other walks away as if nothing happened? How can two people eat the same meal, but only one gets food poisoning? How can two people be exposed to the same bacteria or virus, but only one

of them gets sick? We do not really have health care in our modern society; what we practice is “sick care.” We believe the cure for our pain and suffering has to come from the “outside” in the form of a drug. If this drug only treats the symptom, we will become dependent on the drug. In the same erroneous way, we look externally for love and happiness. We believe other people are responsible for providing us with these feelings. We then become dependent on this significant other. Many people in today’s society have been sucked into believing that happiness comes from material possessions, such as expensive cars, houses, clothes, or “bling.” Happiness does not come in a pill or a drug. We can’t buy happiness, and we can’t buy health or peace of mind. But we can alleviate our aches, pains, diseases, failures, and unhappiness by changing the way we think, talk, and act. Happiness, peace of mind, and success are all in our hands.

The Birth of the Four Seasons System

Since 1983, I have had approximately 100,000 patient visits. On each visit and with each and every patient, I studied the pattern of their tension, pain, suffering, and injury. I saw first-hand how these patterns affect function, performance, success, happiness, and peace of mind. This helped me develop a technique to alleviate the pain and tension. I feel blessed to have a purpose and such a fulfilling job. However, I began to notice that any time I needed to leave my practice, even just to go home at the end of the day; I felt pressure from patients who begged me to work longer hours so they could get an appointment. There were not enough hours in a day or week for me to see everyone who wished to be on my schedule! Many of my patients only needed an average of two to three visits to heal from one ailment. However, many others experienced great relief at first, but their symptoms kept coming back, and they kept coming back for more visits. This sometimes created a dependency, which is the opposite of what I desire. If I have to repeat the same therapy over and over to give them relief, an underlying problem must be causing their pain to return. You can keep a leaky boat from sinking by continuously pouring out buckets of water. But unless the leak is repaired, the boat will never stay afloat on its own. In some cases, I was able to pour more water out than was leaking in, and the patient enjoyed longer-lasting relief. In other cases, if the patient came back for regular treatments, I barely managed to keep him or her afloat. In extreme cases where the leak was too big and the underlying problem had caused chronic or degenerative changes, my treatments couldn't provide any relief - it was too little, too late. In the cases where I could find and correct the underlying cause of my patient's pain (repair the leak), permanent healing was possible. I have no desire to serve as a drug for my patients and make them totally dependent on me. I want them to take charge of their own lives and eliminate their own tension, pain, and suffering. I want to teach my patients how to fish, as the saying goes, rather than spoon-feed them the meal.

In 1985, I diligently started to search and pray for knowledge that would help me teach my patients how to understand the cause of their tension, pain, and suffering, as well as an application that would help them overcome and succeed. I thought that if my patients realized and understood the causes of their tension, failure, pain, and suffering, they could change their behaviors and feelings and eventually obtain success, healing, and peace of mind. Early on, I felt the answer to my quest lay in the ancient Eastern philosophies and the Law of the Five Elements. I had been fascinated with this 5,000-year-old philosophy since I was a student at acupuncture school. At first this philosophy seemed too esoteric to be understood and applied in today's society. I needed to find a way to explain a very complex ancient Eastern viewpoint in modern Western terms. As far back as 2697 B.C., Chinese philosophers talked about the interaction of five elements (sometimes referred to as five transformations), which comprised all things we know and the flow of life. They introduced the concept that everything in nature and in the universe was composed of "Chi" (energy). This Chi was described as being omnipresent and

everlasting. Chi flows within the human body just as it does within all things around us. With Chi (energy), every action had a reaction. Too much or too little of any type of energy was considered potentially stressful, causing harm to our balance and well being.

The Law of the Five Elements is a primary foundation of traditional Chinese acupuncture. It relates all energy and substances to one of the elements - wood, fire, earth, metal, and water - all of which are linked to the seasonal cycles of nature. The ancient Chinese acupuncture masters used the Law of the Five Elements to diagnose not only where the blockages of Chi (tension) were located but also to educate their patients in the causes of their ailments or failures in life. This age-old concept, that those five elements influence human health and well being, originated with Taoist philosophers, who taught about transformations and interactions of Chi in nature and man in the Law of the Five Elements. This law described the way to live and grow in harmony with oneself, others, nature, and the universe, as well as the consequences when man failed to grow or to live in harmony.

The ancient Chinese said the human body is covered with a network of circuits or pathways called meridians. Each of the twelve meridians is related to one of the five elements, associated organs, emotions, mental actions, spiritual aspects, sense organs, a season, and all factors of life. Along the twelve main meridians, which correspond with organ systems in the body, are acupuncture points. In a healthy state, the Chi flows from point to point and all around the body without obstruction. This ancient theory is still the fundamental principle of traditional acupuncture and acupressure practiced today. I believe acupuncture points work as circuit breakers. When overloaded by any stress (cause), tension builds up and the vital flow of Chi stagnates (effect). Localizing the blockage and releasing the tension in a specific acupuncture point allows the body to heal and regenerate itself by restoring the circulation of life energy (Chi). If an individual understands the cause of the blockage, learns from it, and changes his behavior, he can defuse the stress and tension it caused. Freed from stress and tension, he can heal from an ailment and the physical and/or emotional pain and suffering. In a similar manner, if an individual understands the cause of a blockage, learns from it, and changes his behavior, the same individual can perform at his peak and live life to the fullest.

I recall one of the first times I unintentionally found the underlying cause of a patient's physical injury, pain, and suffering. It was in 1985, my first year after immigrating to the United States. I was working as an assistant to a chiropractor in northern California when a man in his late forties came to the practice because he'd been suffering with pain in his right shoulder for a year. The man was the stereotypical new age, old hippie with a ponytail, a crystal around his neck, and Birkenstock sandals, and he was unable to lift his arm more than 45 degrees from his body. Based on the location of the pain and his complaints, I evaluated him using the ancient Chinese principles. The pain he described was located in his upper chest, anterior (front) shoulder, and his biceps muscle, all of which followed the lung meridian. So I started to treat acupressure points along the lung meridian, starting at his thumb and working up towards his shoulder and chest. While working, I told the patient what the lung meridian was associated with

according to ancient Chinese medicine. I said, “The lungs are related to the ability to receive and let go, and disturbances along this meridian can be related to sadness, grief, and holding on.”

“My wife passed away of cancer last year,” he said without any show of emotion. I considered a possible connection between the death of his wife and his shoulder pain, but the man did not seem to be grieving his wife. And he could not recall any trauma or injury to his shoulder, just that the pain and range of motion had gradually worsened over the last year.

As I continued to work on his lung meridian, I kept talking to him and asking him to try to move his arm while I was releasing tension in one reflex point at a time. To his astonishment, he could lift the arm a little higher with each point released. The points were painful to touch but released gradually with my therapy. By the time I started working on his front shoulder, he could lift his arm about 100 degrees.

As I moved along his meridian and started working on the lung point in his upper chest, I asked about his wife and her death and learned that she had a very strong Christian faith. She had been in pain, but was calm and at peace with dying. I asked if her death was hard for him to accept. He seemed to be somewhat disconnected from his own feelings and said that his wife had asked him to promise to accept Jesus in his life. He was still moving his arm up and down while I massaged the chest-lung acu-point, and then he said, “Her only concern before dying was for my salvation.” As he told me this, his voice got louder and emotional. To my amazement, I could feel the muscle and acu-point I was working on go into spasm. I had not increased my pressure, but the man yelled out, “I cannot accept that Jesus was anything more than a regular man.” Then he screamed out in pain from my pressure as if I had stabbed a knife into his chest.

This incident scared me; I had goose bumps up my back. The man dropped his injured arm down to his side as he sobbed. The range of motion we’d gained only seconds earlier was lost; he was now unable to lift the arm more than 45 degrees. The man seemed shaken up by the incident, and I never saw him again. Afterward, I realized that, as the expression goes, I had “touched a nerve” or “pushed his buttons.” What had happened? The acu-point and muscle clearly went into spasm as the man became emotionally upset. The same acu-point that had been almost pain-free from my therapy instantly became extremely painful without me changing the pressure or location. This sudden muscle spasm and pain coincided with the man yelling out what he was upset about. Had he internalized his grief to a point where the tension caused him physical pain? Was he upset with his wife for making him promise to do something he did not believe in? Was he angry with himself for promising his dying wife he would do something he did not believe in? Did he feel unworthy of healing due to guilt? Or was the man in pain because he could not accept or receive salvation? Obviously, he was stuck somewhere and so was the mobility in his shoulder. Why was the increase in pain-free range of motion instantly lost once he spoke about something that was upsetting him? He was clearly in pain but not only in the shoulder joint. Since this incidence I have found that most people are more willing to accept physical pain and limitation rather than acknowledge and deal with the mental and/or emotional pain that might have caused it. This was the first time I witnessed the cause and effect in a

patient suffering physical pain and limitation from being mentally and emotionally stuck and avoiding a problem.

Since that first incident, I have found more and more evidence that physical tension and pain are directly correlated with stressful emotions and thoughts. When working on patients and releasing their muscular tension with deep digital pressure, I literally feel the link between mental/emotional stress and physical tension. As I talk to my patients about their lives and they tell me about their stressful experiences, I feel the tension and tightness in their muscles increase under my fingers. At this point, the patients alert me that the pressure gets increasingly painful or in some cases, even unbearable. This increase in pain is brought on solely by the patient talking about something he or she experienced as stressful and without me changing the point or amount of pressure.

With this knowledge, I started using a systematic approach to applying the ancient Chinese Five Element philosophy when I inquire about my patients' symptoms, emotions, and life situations. Their answers usually reveal that they are stuck and keep repeating behavioral patterns over and over again. I started to believe that people experience unrelenting tension, pain, and suffering because they keep doing what they had been doing and aren't learning from their mistakes. They don't change their ways and hence, their growth is stifled.

While teaching and elaborating on ancient Chinese philosophy during a seminar in Toronto, Canada, in the fall of 1986, it all came together. I realized that I could explain the way behavior and thinking cause pain and suffering using a metaphor of the four seasons. This four season metaphor was derived from the ancient Chinese Law of the Five Elements; hence, the Four Seasons System was born. Now I use it every day in my practice on thousands of patients and still marvel at how it helps me pinpoint the causes of tension, suffering, and pain. Quite frankly, I have yet to discover an aspect of life where the system is not applicable.

The Message

Are you growing or are you stagnant? Are you at peace, or anxious and depressed? Are you healthy and feeling good, or in pain and suffering? Look at all aspects of your life, how you feel throughout your days. Perhaps you're in pain or you're unhappy, but at the same time you might be successful in your career, enjoy a great relationship with your spouse, or have acquired great wealth. Does that mean you're not growing? If you experience negative emotions, tension, or pain, then yes, something is missing! You may not immediately see what's missing, but you need to be whole, and if you're experiencing negative emotions, pain, or tension, you have needs that are not being met. You are not in harmony within yourself or within your surroundings. You need to strive for balance and growth at all times in all areas of your life; you must grow to stay alive, and to be present, complete, whole, and free of suffering.

If we get stuck, we stagnate and stop growing. If we stop growing, parts of us start to die: at first, that which is alive in our hearts, our dreams, desires, and passions. Then our physical bodies - our cells, systems, and functions - start to break down. Our emotions work as a feedback system that indicates when we are stuck or off course; when we're not doing well, we don't feel well about things. Anxiety, depression, or any other negative emotion is a warning signal that we have fallen off the path. Negative emotions cause tension. We start to experience aches and pains, followed by injury, degeneration, disease, and ultimately our death. Just as negative emotions are feedback that we are out of balance, so are tension, suffering, and pain.

This book is an attempt to apply this ancient wisdom to understand the causes of pain and suffering in present-day life.

The Four Seasons System is about timing and doing the right thing at the right time in harmony with our surroundings and circumstances.

This knowledge, when understood and applied, will show you how to defuse tension in your mind and body, as well as finding the way to health, performance, success, and peace of mind. Understanding the implications of cause and effect on our bodies and minds will guide us toward living our lives to the fullest. It forces us to take responsibility for how our lives are turning out and gives us the tools to change for the better. The Four Seasons way of life is to strive for a balance; to be present, honest, and clear on intent and direction; to be engaged, authentic, and passionate; to accept what life brings and learn from it; to approve of yourself; and to appreciate what you have and remember what you learned. This will keep you on a path of continuous growth and allow you to fulfill your potential. It will keep you in the present, in harmony and peace.

Where do you want to be? Are you unhappy with your life? Have you had enough of your aches and pains? Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired? Life will eventually come

to an end for all of us. Life is precious; everyone has the ability to be alive, to learn, and to grow. The process outlined in this book shows you how to constantly question the results of your life - your actions and behavior - and learn from them. This learning assures a continuous growth. By following the steps outlined in the Four Seasons System, you essentially use the process of elimination to get closer and closer to meeting all the needs in your life.

My hope is that this book will help you, the reader, free yourself from tension, pain, and suffering by understanding the causes and effects of your own actions. I want this knowledge to help you reach your potential to live a more successful, healthy, happy, and fulfilled life. I wrote this book to show you how to find and repair your own leaks for successful sailing and navigation on your way through life. A thousand-mile journey starts with one step, and most importantly, the only thing you have any control over is always the step you take right now.

Overview of the Four Seasons System

“The spring energy gives birth; summer exemplifies flourishing or development; fall is representative of gathering in, and winter correlates with a time of storage or conservation.”

Nei-Ching, the Yellow Emperor, circa 2000 B.C.

“And let us not weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Gal. 6:9)

When you consider the natural world, the changing of seasons is impossible to ignore. Spring, summer, fall, and winter - each phase is marked by characteristic changes that come and go in a cycle that repeats every year. Spring is the beginning or birth of a cycle, while winter is the end, a burial of everything that is dead and preserving that which will live on as the cycle of life continues into a new spring. Just as nature around us progresses through its natural sequence of change, so do we as individuals. In the world around us, spring suddenly explodes with shoots and leaves bursting forth with life. The same thing happens within us when we get a great idea or realize a new purpose or direction. In nature we find summer blooming and flourishing, but we also bloom and flourish when we authentically and passionately labor in what we love. On the outside, the world harvests in the fall, but also within ourselves we harvest by accepting and receiving what life bring us, learning and growing as human beings. Finally, in nature's winter, not only does life go into a state of stillness, rest, and recuperation, but we also see the farmer store the excesses of his harvest. As individuals we must also store knowledge, remember lessons learned, accumulate and exercise wisdom, appreciate what we have, and allow ourselves to rest and recuperate. As man progresses through the cycles of the Four Seasons, the seasons are echoed within us; each season is ever present and ever basic to our life.

However, the metaphor of the Four Seasons is not limited to the timeframe of a year, or any other timeframe for that matter. We typically think of the four seasons we experience in nature as something that aligns with the course of a calendar year. And when speaking of a single day (in the metaphor), morning is governed by spring, midday (noon and afternoon) by summer, evening by fall, and night by winter. But in life, depending on what you're talking about, the cycle can be much longer or much shorter. A cycle could complete in minutes - it could be as simple as making the decision to vacuum the floor (spring), pulling out the vacuum and using it (summer), emptying the dirt and putting away the machine (fall), and finally sitting down, resting, and appreciating a job well done and a clean home (winter). Theoretically, we could plant (spring) bean sprouts, watch them grow (summer) for a few days, and then harvest (fall) in a week or so. If, on the other hand, we planted (spring) apple seeds, it would take several years (summer) before the first harvest (fall) was yielded. Then if we maintained (winter) the soil and pruned the tree properly, we could continue harvesting fruit every year for the rest of our life.

Each phase could last a minute, or it could last decades, depending on the harvest you're trying to realize. For our purposes, the Four Seasons metaphor describes one complete cycle of any duration of time.

The Four Seasons System is a way of living in balance. Within it lie the answers to a peaceful, fulfilled, healthy, and successful life. It is a metaphor explaining the passage of time and timing (doing the right thing at the right time). The Four Seasons is a navigational system for maneuvering through life and making the most out of it. All things experienced in life must pass through the four phases in order to arrive at completion. We do not always know with certainty during the planning stage of ventures and projects when the harvest will occur. However, if we follow the principles of the Four Seasons System faithfully, a harvest will always be realized.

The Four Seasons System has some similarities to what you might have learned from other self-help books about realizing your dreams and setting goals (which is spring), authentically engaging in life with positive expectation of a harvest (summer), being worthy to receive and accept what life brings you (fall). However, this system takes it a step further with winter, the phase in which you remember what you learned and appreciate what you have, to keep what you gained. In our modern disposable (gain and throw away) world, people tend to gravitate towards quick money, fast food, and rapid weight loss. But what good is accomplished by gaining prosperity, acquiring new knowledge, or losing excess weight, if we lack the wisdom to manage the money, use the knowledge, or maintain a lean body? Too often what we are then faced with is starting all over, having to experience the same life lessons again and again until we move fully through all four seasons. `

SPRING: fertilize/plant, intension, decision, clear commitment.

SUMMER: water/weed, discernment, authentic action, engagement with passion.

FALL: harvest, acceptance, learning, closure, achieving and receiving.

WINTER: store/preserve, appreciation, maintenance, keeping and remembering.

The Four Seasons System applies in all aspects of our lives.

Spring

In the spring the farmer spreads manure, collected over the year from his livestock, onto his fields. He turns the soil over to make the soil fertile. He examines the soil and the climate to find what seed will yield the largest crop, then takes his best seeds and plants them.

In Sports:

As he prepares himself for the new season, the Olympic high jumper must first view how his failures in the previous seasons can help him get a clear insight on what to do and what not to do, as well as what he needs and what he does not need. The successes are the harvest from the last season and the seeds for future harvest. It's out of the failures (manure) that a larger harvest can be reaped. He must prepare himself mentally by seeing how bad habits, bad technique, and

any negative beliefs from the past can be used to get clear on what good habits, techniques, and beliefs will serve him in future competitions (fertilizing). He must plan for the new season, set personal goals, and commit to a demanding training schedule and diet (planting). He must be clear, committed, and assertive on his direction, as well as know what it will take to accomplish his goal and dream.

In Business:

In the beginning of a new business venture the businesswoman first frees herself from wasteful and destructive business partners, bad habits, limiting beliefs, and disappointing experiences (fertilizing). By doing so she realizes that everything she previously considered bad or wasteful will serve her as a fertilizer for future success. She then investigates her potential market, does her due diligence, establishes a business strategy, and finally makes a commitment by investing her capital into the most fertile project (planting). The successful businesswoman is dynamic and clear on what she intends to do and how to achieve her goal.

In True Love Relationships:

After a failed marriage I found myself with poor self-esteem, full of grief, sadness, regret, resentment, anger, and fear. Beat down and disillusioned, I questioned if I would ever find the right woman and experience true love in a committed relationship. I had to let go of and forgive the past: old pain, disappointments, stinking thinking, negative attitude, and wasteful belief systems from past relationships (fertilizing). The waste from the past became the fertilizer of my future. Once I realized I was fine, and even better off, without that relationship, I was able to get clear on how I needed to be, what I wanted from a relationship, and exactly how I wanted my life companion to be. Learning from the past and using it to help me get clear on what I really wanted prevented me from repeating the same mistakes over again. I made a list of qualities that I desired in a life companion and best friend, and as I wrote I realized many essential qualities that I had not been clear on before I met my ex-wife. I had grown older and wiser, and I had become clear on what was important and what I desired in a relationship. Each failed relationship in the past can help you see more clearly about what you want in the future. Once I was clear on what I desired, I committed to find this woman (planting).

In all three examples, you see the people applying lessons from past failures, to change to a new approach, to get clear on exactly what they need (fertilizing), and to commit to what they want out of the future (planting). These are critical steps that create the foundation of the whole cycle. When we don't take these steps every time we begin something new, we leave the harvest of our future to chance and doom ourselves to repeat old mistakes over and over, limiting any potential success.

Summer

In the summer the farmer waters and weeds his fields, and inspects them daily with joy, because he anticipates a rich harvest.

In Sports:

As the high-jumper persistently trains for the next Olympics, he must not allow anything to deter him from his goal. In his mind, he visualizes performing the perfect jump repeatedly each and every day (watering). Fully engaged in his training, he has fun as he labors in love. He overcomes obstacles by focusing on solutions rather than problems (weeding). With a passion for his sport, he tracks his daily progress, anticipates success, and avoids socializing with people (even family members and friends) that do not support his training, diet, or positive attitude.

In Business:

Once the businesswoman has invested her money and has made her commitment, she knows there is no backing out of the project. She understands that she must engage and keep her co-investors enthusiastic and focused (watering). She must talk, think, feel, and believe in success. She must remain focused in the here and now and take necessary actions to counter obstacles (weeding).

In True Love Relationships:

As I sorted through profiles of potential dates on an online dating web site, I kept focused on my list of what I expected in a life partner and best friend. Every day I visualized this authentic woman, her character, her looks, her interests (watering), not wasting any time on pursuing dates that did not fit my list of essential qualities (weeding).

By being true to their hearts and anticipating what they desired (watering), the people in the three examples achieved something we all want at the deepest level: to be authentically engaged in all of our activities each and every day, experiencing joy and happiness in what we do. By staying on course with their goals and overcoming obstacles (weeding), they focus on the solutions (what they want) instead of the problems (what they do not want). They feel confident that nothing will stand in the way of a positive harvest.

Fall

In the fall the farmer is rewarded for his work as he accepts and receives his harvest.

In Sports:

The young high jumper performs to his expectations and accomplishes his perfect jump, and in so doing, he not only wins his Olympic gold medal but also sets a new world record (harvest). He had already accomplished the world record jump so many times in his own mind

that the record was his before he even competed! He is humble and empathetic towards his fellow competitors, realizing that their efforts and disappointments are intimately linked to his success. Still, he understands success was not achieved without sacrifice, which was proportional to his efforts. He learned that without supportive family, friends, and coaches, his goal could not come to pass.

In Business:

The businesswoman receives the financial rewards she worked so hard to achieve (harvest). She knows and understands that her actions in planning, persistence of effort, and constant anticipation have resulted in success, and she feels she is deserving and worthy of that financial success and personal gratification.

In True Love Relationships:

After the second or third date with Sue, I realized that I had found my ideal woman and best friend. She was everything I had conceptualized in spring and visualized on a daily basis in summer. It was as if we were made for each other with so much in common, including life experiences, interests, morals, integrity, ethics, and diet. I was attracted to her looks and body type, and we both enjoyed spending time together as friends. I felt I was worthy and deserved her - my dream relationship had become a reality.

Harvesting what you want out of life means receiving the experiences and a sense of accomplishment. The three examples worked hard to get what they wanted, and they felt they deserved to get it. Understanding this, accepting and receiving the outcome will allow them to rest and reflect peacefully in winter.

Winter

In the winter the farmer stores and preserves the excess from his harvest, so it will feed him and his family over the cold, unproductive winter. For him, it is a time to be still, to remember what he learned, and to appreciate what he has. It is a time for spending quality time with loved ones, maintaining equipment, resting, recuperating, and reflecting.

In Sports:

Our young high jumper takes time to rest and recuperate after a long, intense season of training and competition. This provides his muscles ample time to heal from the punishing, rigorous workouts he subjected them to on a daily basis. He also takes time to reflect and evaluate his season mentally (storing) to remember what he learned and appreciate what he has. He spends time studying videotapes of his techniques so he can improve for the next season, and he shows his appreciation to coaches, family, friends, and all who supported him, because he knows that he will require their support again in the future.

In Business:

The businesswoman has carefully placed a portion of her increased wealth in a saving account to serve as a form of security (storing) - taking the save-it-for-a-rainy-day approach. She also invests a portion of her financial reward back into her venture, enabling her success to continue working on her behalf. She buys assets in the form of savings bonds and low-risk mutual funds so that her money can work for her and secure her retirement. She reflects on her past cycle to remember what she learned. Evaluation of past experiences provides wisdom. She has capital stored to use as “seeds” for a time when the right opportunity or ideal financial climate arrives to begin a new venture (spring).

In True Love Relationships:

To maintain a romantic relationship and true love for a lifetime, one can never take his or her partner for granted. For our love and friendship to last, I must show appreciation, love, and respect every day at all times. Spending quality time together is essential, the more the better. We both enjoy spending time together and being each other's best friend. We are equally willing to have each other's back, to protect and keep each other safe. True love means you are loving even when you do not feel like it. I put in the work, effort, and will power to sincerely listen to my partner even when I am tired. Every day I appreciate Sue, I show her my love, gratitude and appreciation by spending quality time and sincerely paying attention and listening to her - showing her through quality time spent together, and telling her, in person as well as in text messages, how much I love and appreciate her throughout the day. This is how true love can last.

Rest, reflection, and appreciation for the harvest you've experienced bring the Four Seasons Cycle to a close. In each of the examples, a quest for a harvest has come to an end, and the person is preparing for the next beginning so the cycle can continue and they can accomplish even more. In each example, the person takes specific actions to ensure he or she completes that phase of the cycle in a way that readies them for what's coming in the future. Every accomplishment starts as a seed that is planted in fertilized soil. That seed is watered and obstacles to success are avoided by weeding. Then the hard work pays off in receiving a harvest, which is stored and appreciated while the person rests, recuperates, and prepares for what need (goal) he or she desires to meet next. Each phase builds upon the last, one activity leads to the next, to create success in life.

Cycles of Life

Life is a never-ending sequence of cycles. Each cycle of time can be divided into smaller cycles of shorter duration, and each cycle is part of a bigger cycle of longer duration. For example, the high jumper's completion of a cycle of setting a goal, working towards it, accomplishing the goal, and appreciating his Olympic gold medal can be broken into smaller cycles. It can be broken down into a four season metaphor of every month, every week, every

day, and each and every individual workout or jump. So can the final jump in the Olympics be broken down to the Four Seasons phases as well.

The final jump's spring (clear and committed): As he is getting ready for the final jump that could win him the gold medal and give him the world record, the high jumper is calm, present, at peace, and assertive. He is clear on what he has to do. He visualizes one last time being in the zone and making the perfect jump. He sees it the way he wants it to be, as he has over a thousand times in his preparations for this moment. He is committed to his jump, breathing deep, slow, and relaxed.

The final jump's summer (action): As he starts to run up to the bar, everything happens in slow motion. He is present, relaxed, and engaged from his heart and soul, full of passion. The jump is executed effortlessly to perfection, just as it has been in his mind over a thousand times. His muscle memory does not know the difference between performing it in the mind versus the body.

The final jump's fall (completion): As he realizes that he won the gold and set the world record, he has to pinch himself to make sure that he is not dreaming or visualizing. As the slow motion sensation ends, he erupts in celebration that continues for hours after he receives his gold medal.

The final jump's winter (recovery): After receiving the gold, the high jumper is in a state of gratitude and appreciation, as he is ready for well-deserved rest.

Remember the completion of any cycle of any duration of time is a full four seasons cycle. The Four Seasons System can be applied to a short cycle of completing one task. Thinking about a longer duration, the high jumper's entire career, even entire life, could be described in terms of the four season cycle.

In your life right now you are in different seasons in your career, relationships, projects, health, fitness, etc. Each one of your cycles could be broken down into smaller cycles and be a part of a larger cycle. Take, for example, your marriage or commitment to your significant other. It could be described in terms of the entire duration of the marriage (or till death of either partner brings it to an end), or broken down to smaller cycles of day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month, or year-by-year.

Spring (fertilize and plant): Each morning you begin by forgiving yourself and your partner for causing tension or drama from the previous day. You decide how to change your approach, how you are, what you do, and how you react, based on how your approach worked yesterday. You ask yourself: Am I still committed to my partner? Do I still love him or her? You are honest with yourself about what you want, and your intention in the relationship. You get clear on how you want to be as a partner and what you need from your partner, doing so without judgment or blame. You can even re-state your wedding vows in your mind. If you wake up one morning and you cannot make yourself forgive or re-commit, then you need to be honest with yourself and your mate. Continuing without forgiving and committing, plants poisonous seeds in an infertile soil and the harvest will not be to your liking.

Summer (water and weed): Throughout your day, keep thinking about all the good things you like about your mate. Anticipate with excitement seeing him or her; visualize his or her face smiling. Communicate authentically from your heart your love and your needs.

Fall (harvest): Receive and accept your mate the way he/she is. Receive his or her love. Request what you need. Ask for clarification when you do not understand or feel hurt by what your mate says or does, rather than jumping to conclusions assuming what he or she meant.

Winter (store and preserve): Show appreciation towards your mate. Listen sincerely to what is said. Spend quality time together.

In the same way can you break down your current job into a larger cycle for the entire lifespan of that job, or into smaller daily, weekly, or monthly cycles. In a daily cycle for your work:

Spring (fertilize and plant): Each morning is the spring and a new beginning. Use yesterday's experiences, good or bad, to get clear on what you want to accomplish and how you need to change your approach. Get clear on your purpose and intent. Write a to-do list and prioritize the importance of the things you want to get accomplished. Once you are clear on what you want to accomplish today and why you want to accomplish it, make a commitment to get it done.

Summer (water and weed): Get engaged in what you do. Keep focusing on the good and what you want from your work. Smile, have fun, be authentic and optimistic, focusing on the solutions instead of the problems. Be inspiring and part of the solution instead of negative, gossiping, and part of the problem.

Fall (harvest): On your way home from work think through all the things you accomplished and what you learned today. No matter how your day went, you can always learn from the experiences.

Winter (store and preserve): As you are retiring for the day, appreciate your job and the payment it brings. Remember what you learned. Make sure you get enough rest to recover for another workday.

As you can see, the four seasons cycle can expand and contract to almost any duration of time, depending on your situation. Any imbalance in any season of any cycle can perpetuate further imbalances in later cycles. This is how problems grow exponentially - remember, whatever you sow, you reap.

What if You're Out of Balance?

Being out of balance in any one season affects the whole cycle. In spring, if the farmer did not dispose of accumulated waste products by fertilizing his soil, his barn would have become toxic and his soil unfertile. If on the other hand he failed to plant, he would have had no harvest to reap. If he did not research what crop was best for his soil and climate, he would not have gotten the most from his efforts.

If the businesswoman did not free herself of destructive habits and change her approach from lessons learned, it would cause her to repeat fruitless business ventures. If she procrastinated investigating potential markets, doing her due diligence, and planning sound business strategies, success would be unlikely. If she was not clear on what she was “sowing” and rushed her decisions, she might not approve of her subsequent harvest. On the other hand if she procrastinated and failed to take advantage of opportunities - if she failed to sow at all - inflation and taxes would eventually devour her capitol and resources, and the opportunity would pass by.

If I had not cleansed my own mind through self-realization and inquiry, counseling, books, and seminars, I would not have been able to change my behavior. I would have kept my destructive beliefs, bad habits, and lack of trust from my first marriage; I would have entered any new relationship with suitcases full of old garbage. If I had not gotten clear on what I wanted in a relationship, I would have found myself alone or in another relationship as dysfunctional as my previous one.

In summer, if the farmer did not anticipate a harvest, why would he bother tilling the soil? If he did not water, his anticipated harvest would dry out and bear no fruit. If he did not focus on weeding when necessary, the weeds would eventually take over and strangle his crop. If the athlete did not enjoy what he was doing, if he couldn't envision himself succeeding at making the jump as he approached the bar, he would fall flat, wasting his time, energy, and money. He would be a phony if he continued to train without believing he could succeed. If his positive expectation and focus were not stronger than the impending obstacles, the obstacles would emerge the declared winner despite his best efforts.

In fall, if the farmer did not go into his field to gather his righteous and well-deserved harvest, it could not come in by itself. Eventually he would face starvation. If I had been unable to receive Sue's love, thinking I did not deserve it or not believing she was true, I would never have realized the relationship. If the businesswoman had not cashed in when the business venture was ripe, then she would not have realized the harvest.

And in winter, what would happen if the farmer did not exercise caution by storing away the excess of his harvest? It would waste or rot. What if the farmer impatiently attempted to plant during the winter, with snow and ice on the ground? Nothing would grow. If he failed to maintain his equipment, it would fail to perform when he needed it. If he failed to preserve his harvest, he might not survive the rigors of winter. If the businesswoman failed to save and instead spent her financial gain as soon as she received it, she would have to start over again, assuming of course that she could obtain seed money to re-invest when the right opportunity came along. And if I became too involved in my work and career, if I took Sue for granted and failed to show her the appreciation she deserved, if we did not spend ample time together enjoying each other, our relationship would slowly die. I could potentially lose not only love, but my health as well.

Anytime we get out of balance in any of the seasons, we will experience stress and tension which ultimately affects our health. If we stay out of balance, get stuck in one season, or

keep repeating the same mistake in the same season every go around, the tension and stress will accumulate to the point that it will cause us injury or disease. Every action has a reaction. Every effect has a cause. Living in balance with your cycles of life will accumulate (multiply) greater health, peace of mind, peak performance, and success. Living out of balance with the four seasons will accumulate (multiply) greater pain, suffering, and failure. As you sow, so will you reap. Each time we successfully complete a cycle, the harvest will increase for a greater life. Each time we repeat an imbalanced behavior the consequences will get greater and our suffering will increase.

All things you have ever completed, all things you are about to complete, and all things you will ever complete must pass through the various phases of the Four Seasons. By discovering where you are, you realize what you need to do. Health, peace of mind, peak performance, and success in any area of life all depend upon doing the right thing at the right time, in harmony with the cycles of the Four Seasons.