

Fall

In the fall the farmer is rewarded for his work as he accepts and receives his harvest. As nature teaches him each year he learns from his success as well as his failure to improve as a farmer and grow as a man. He accepts the harvest he is dealt and the change of the seasons to move on with ease.

In the Four Seasons metaphor, fall represents reaping the harvest you've planted and tended over the spring and summer. This is the time farmers are rewarded for their labor and reap their crop.

Fall stands for the metaphorical harvest - the completion, finishing, the consequence and end result of anything you do. It could be the completion or conclusion of a conversation, the finishing or failure in completing a task, graduating or not graduating from college, or the reception of test results that indicate you or your mate is pregnant. This outcome or harvest could be interpreted as good or bad by you, nevertheless it is what it is; your harvest. It is your karma, the consequence or outcome of your words and actions, or lack thereof. A balance of our inner "fall" represents the ability to accept what life brings us, learn from it, get closure and move on. Fall accomplishments happen anytime something is completed or anytime we learn from experiences to be better for them; it could take a minute, a day, a year or it could take a lifetime.

When you embrace the Four Seasons system of living, fall is a time for harvesting your life experiences. Harvest stands for receiving, as well as the ability to ask or request (bringing it in). It is the season for accepting the passage of time and that you are maturing; accepting and approving of yourself, your own body, and your accomplishments; and understanding and learning from your life experiences with empathy. Balance in fall is important because if you to learn, you always grow and have accomplishments in your life, which are very important to your self-esteem and the way you feel about your life.

I believe that anyone who doesn't accomplish things, or who feels that he/she hasn't accomplished anything, won't feel good about him or herself. There are three ways this might happen. First, there are people who just don't recognize their accomplishments, or never feel they've done well enough. Perfectionists, for example, may do amazing things, but feel that nothing is good enough, therefore never feel accomplished at all. The second type of people may never give much thought to the needs they want to meet, so they just go along through life never deliberately planting or watering any "seeds." They have little to get excited about and no reason to expect a harvest, and they do not learn from their pattern. The third type of people might have done the labor of planting, watering and weeding, but don't feel worthy of a harvest. In any of these three scenarios, the people find themselves in the "fall" of their lives (as it happens when every day or year is coming to an end and as we get older) feeling like something is missing - like they haven't accomplished enough. Their self-esteem is affected, and they feel poorly about themselves. Typically we don't always feel great about everything we do in life - everyone is likely to experience one or more of these cases at some point in life. Nothing can

change what happens, but we can always learn from the past. Every life experience is a harvest; a person with a balanced fall will learn lessons from these experiences to realize a harvest.

Each year, as the seasons turn from summer to fall, people often experience an acute awareness of time passing and of growing older. For those who have not reaped their harvests in life, fall is the time of sadness or desperation because they don't want to accept that time is passing by and life is happening in ways they may not have chosen. They bemoan that another year has passed with nothing to show for it. Anyone who has lived life a little has probably already found out that things do not always work out the way we expected them to. The difference between what is (reality) and what we expected is called "the gap." This gap is where we get stuck. Not being able to accept reality is the greatest cause of tension, pain, and suffering. Let's say you got stuck in the mud. It's not what you expected or desired, but sometimes it happens. How you react to the situation is what determines if you will suffer or not. You could have any number of different reactions to getting stuck. One reaction is denial, thinking, "I'm not stuck in the mud." This reaction and denial of what is a reality will not get you anywhere, but will prolong the suffering. Another reaction is the victim, thinking, "My mother/boss/husband/teacher/newspaper/government/etc. told me to go this way; it's their fault they gave me wrong directions." The victims will not take responsibility for their situations but rather blame others, circumstances, or the world at large, hence never learning from their own mistakes.

Opposite to the victim is the martyr, who believes, "I'm so stupid, how could I do this, I should have known better." The martyr keeps beating him/herself up over what he or she believes are unforgivable mistakes, thereby perpetuating the suffering and never learning or moving on. Not one of those three approaches will get you out of the mud. However, the final reaction will. Surrendering to the fact that you got stuck in the mud and accepting the reality of your situation (accepting what is) is the only way to move forward and learn from your past actions.

The moment something happens it is in the past. The past is our teacher. This of course does not mean that you have to resign yourself to being stuck in the mud forever. Once you accept and learn, you can stay calm and present, and you can ask yourself what you can do right now to get yourself out of the mud. You can evaluate the situation and take action. Let's say you start moving your arms and legs to get out of the mud when you realize that this action makes you sink deeper into the mud. You accept this fact and calmly consider other actions. Maybe you start screaming for help, but you realize that you are starting to lose your voice and no one seems to hear you or comes to your rescue. So you calmly stop yelling to preserve your voice so you will be able to yell if you see someone in the distance that could hear your calling. Now you stay calm and still until you come up with another solution or someone comes to your rescue. If you believe that everything that happens in your life has a purpose, then it is your job to learn the purpose and accept what happens to you.

This applies to other people in your life, too. A common misconception exists that if you love or care for someone, you need to feel bad for them and with them. When a loved one suffers, do you suffer with them? And if so, does it help your loved one? Probably not. Think about it: have you ever seen a toddler fall off a bike? There are two ways the child's parents might react. One way is to say, "You are okay; you are tough; I know you can do it." When parents react like this, the child stands up and

looks startled for a moment, then realizes the fall wasn't that bad, is back on the bike a minute later, and the whole event is forgotten. The other reaction is when the parent comes rushing, nervous and upset, saying, "Ooh, poor baby, are you okay? Are you hurting? I am so sorry you fell." The child may be a little startled at first, but upon seeing this reaction from his or her parents, the child starts bawling and sobbing uncontrollably. This makes the parent even more emotional, which perpetuates the crying of the child. Of course, depending on the severity of the accident or injury, you may not tell a child with a broken leg to stand up and walk it off, but suffering with your child only makes things worse. You should always remain calm, present, empathetic, and accommodating.

The first Christmas after I moved to the United States, my girlfriend and I had just broken up, and I was all by myself in a new country, though not unhappily so. I was looking forward to a few days off. I was planning to go out and have a good meal, watch some movies on TV, and sleep in to catch up on my rest. I felt perfectly fine about my holiday plan until a patient asked what I was doing for Christmas. When I told her, she said, "Oh that's horrible! You are in a new country and have no friends or family to spend Christmas with." Upon hearing this I almost got tears in my eyes. I started to feel bad and sorry for myself, but only because she drew attention to the loneliness of my situation.

Another patient told me that in a class he was taking through his church on counseling married couples, he was instructed not to offer a tissue to the person he was counseling when they were crying, unless they asked for it, because the simple act could perpetuate the client's crying. Instead, staying calm and present, sincerely listening with empathy, and letting the person ask for what they needed would instill confidence that the client will be okay. Feeling sympathy or pity for someone cripples them and sends a message that they are not okay or able to take care of themselves. Feeling empathy for a fellow human, on the other hand, empowers them to learn, grow, and move on.

Mike, a fifty-four-year-old man, came to me with severe neck pain that radiated into his chest, down his upper back, into his right arm, outside the elbow, and into the thumb and index finger. The pain was severe and made it difficult for him to sleep - he woke up screaming in pain when he moved his neck the wrong way in his sleep. If he tried to turn his head to the right or extend his neck he felt a sharp stabbing pain, and the muscles in his lateral triceps had started to atrophy. An MRI had revealed a bulging disc in his neck that was putting pressure on his nerves and spinal cord. He had seen a neurosurgeon who recommended that he have surgery to fuse two vertebrae in his neck. At the time, Mike's wife was battling terminal cancer and his attention and all of his energy were directed towards finding a cure and spending quality time with her. Mike was considering going ahead with the surgery, but the timing was not good, so he came to me to see if I could help give him relief and address the injury holistically.

After examining him I found his tension was located in the scalene (neck muscles that bring the head forward and assist in shallow breathing) and the pectoralis minor (a deep upper chest muscle), which indicate a blockage in fall. I told him fall was related to the ability to accept life as it happens. Life does not always happen the way we want or expect, and accepting his wife's cancer did not mean that they had to resign to the cancer. Holding on to the past or not accepting what has happened will affect the breathing, cause grief and a form of mental or emotional constipation, as well as create tension in

his neck and chest muscles. I mentioned that it was quite possible that his pain came from guilt (an emotion often accompanying a fall imbalance) and believing he had to suffer with her. Mike admitted that he felt guilty and regretted treating his wife poorly in the past. She was a very loving woman and Mike, who had done a lot of work on himself over the years, told me that throughout his life he had a hard time receiving love and kindness. Since his childhood he had adopted the belief system that he was not good enough or worthy of receiving love. Early in his marriage, he had fought and resisted his wife's love and giving, by treating her poorly and thus causing her pain. They had overcome these challenges together, but now that she had cancer, he felt horrible about his past actions and felt he was at fault.

I told him he needed to stop beating himself up and let go of the guilt. I asked him if he ever deliberately tried to cause his wife hurt or pain. Never, he said. And I asked if he could honestly look back on their past and say that he'd done the best he could with the time, energy, resources, state of mind, and belief systems he had at the time. Yes, he said he had. I said loving somebody does not mean you have to suffer with them. If two people suffer, then two people are stuck in the past and that does not help either one. I said it was important that he continued to seek treatments and cures for his wife, but he shouldn't pity her or feel sorry for her or himself. By showing her empathy, asking what he could do for her, listening to her, and accepting and receiving her as she was, he would be showing her love and empowering her. It was important that they both took this unwanted experience as an opportunity to love and support each other and to learn about life and themselves.

As I was talking to Mike, I released tension on the lung and large intestine meridians in his arm, chest, upper back, and neck. As Mike accepted the new belief system - that supporting his wife did not include suffering with her or feeling guilty - the tension and pain in his neck was released. When he left he was almost pain-free and able to turn his head. I told him I was happy to give him relief, but that it wouldn't last unless he stopped suffering and feeling guilty about his wife's condition and learned to accept what life brought them.

Balance in Fall

Whether it's what you want or not, fall will bring a harvest. There are no mistakes, only learning opportunities. Everything in life happens for a reason. Learning, understanding, and accepting what life brings, with empathy for others and ourselves, is what makes us mature, grow, and move on. To be successful during this season, you must accept your circumstances without blame or guilt. Beating yourself up, or having a pity party will not change the reality of what is.

The balanced fall is full of empathy. These people nurture and support others without pity. They care for others and themselves with love and empathy and without taking on the suffering of others. These people provide substance, strength, and endurance, pulling together all of their resources for harvesting. They are hard-working, un-selfish, supportive people, who finish the job. They are calm, accepting, understanding, and empathetic with themselves and others, even when things do not work out the way they expected. They give unconditionally, but are still good at receiving without feeling they have to reciprocate. They know how to ask for or request what they need from an individual without

demanding or making the person feel guilty. They are sensitive and empathetic to other's feelings and needs and often very intuitive. Other people feel comfortable with the balanced fall and seek them up for counsel, confession, or support.

People who are balanced in fall know how to make peace in confrontations because they can empathize with both sides and understand that every story has multiple sides. When the balanced falls finds a word they don't understand, they look it up in the dictionary. They do not assume anything, but rather come to conclusions by gathering information and asking questions to get a clear understanding. They accept what life brings them, are good at learning from their past mistakes, and can let go of past expectations. They accept and surrender to reality (what is). They can handle unexpected changes of circumstances with ease - they learn, move on, and go with the flow. Change is inevitable; that is a fact. Nothing will ever be the way it was. Not accepting the truth of life will cause us to get "stuck" in fall.

Balanced emotions for the fall metaphor are feeling calm, present, and empathetic. Anytime a person is not balanced in fall, he or she will experience negative emotions of either a hypoactive nature, such as depression, apathy, indifference, or rejection, or emotions of a hyperactive nature, such as anxiety, sadness, regret, guilt, or grief. These can be your most important clues to where an imbalance exists in your life. A person with an imbalance in the fall will tend to have too little fall or too much fall. Remember in ancient Chinese acupuncture philosophy: too little and too much are both harmful.

Too little fall is often characterized by the following patterns:

- Often beating themselves up and blaming themselves for everything, acting as martyrs.
- Not feeling worthy enough to receive.
- Never feeling good enough, rejecting themselves, lacking self-approval and acceptance.
- Having a hard time asking for or requesting help.
- Trying to please everyone and feeling guilty if they did not.
- Often feeling they have to take care of and share others' pain and suffering.
- Never having any time for themselves.
- Feeling unlovable or unaccepted, thus separating themselves from family, friends and co-workers, not feeling worthy of being included. In an extreme, acting antisocial.
- Never learning hence continuing to do the same mistakes over and over.
- Having a difficult time accepting gifts or compliments without having to reciprocate immediately (which makes it a trade rather than receiving a gift).
- When exhausted being full of self-rejection, depression, indifference, and apathy. Ceasing to care and letting go of everything.
- Often suffering from irregular bowel movement and tending to have loose stool or diarrhea.

Too much fall is often characterized by the following patterns:

- Inability to accept what life brings, taking no responsibility but rather blaming others and circumstances and acting like a victim.
- Being selfish takers that attempt to gain at the expense of others.
- Coming across as lacking empathy, acceptance, or understanding for others.
- Being in a state of self-pity, and not caring about the tribulations, unfairness, or injustices suffered by others.
- Demanding that their requests are met and manipulating to get their way using guilt. Often believing they are entitled.
- Often needy to the point that it drains others, frequently hungering for and asking for compliments, as if they can never get enough of them.
- Never learning, hence continuing to make the same mistakes over and over.
- Tending to be extremely possessive with loved ones, family members, co-workers, and friends, often using guilt trips and manipulation to get what they want.
- Assuming others should know what they want.
- Being overly emotional, sad, and often weeping for themselves.
- Saying life is not fair and not accepting what is.
- Typically holding on to and grieving the past. Grieving and holding on to expectations that did not come true, instead of accepting what is.
- Tending to have irregular bowel movement and are often constipated.

When Kevin, a forty-nine-year-old man, came to my office with a tweaked lower back, I found a blockage in his large intestine meridian to be the underlying cause. He told me he woke up in the morning with a stiff back and after bending over his back pain got worse. When I looked at him, I could see his spine was leaning to the left due to spasm in lower back muscles. He had seen his family doctor and took a day off from work, and at first he felt a little better. But the injury flared up again and lingered and was especially bad in the mornings, making it hard for Kevin to get out of bed or go to work. The pain was located in his left lower back at the large intestine reflex points just above the sacrum and hip bones, and he had a tender spot on the left large intestine alarm point located two inches lateral to his belly button. I told Kevin that the large intestine often experiences problems when we're upset about something in our life, when we hold onto things, or when we have a hard time accepting circumstances.

Kevin was a firefighter and liked his job, but his true passion was being the pole vaulting coach to a local high school. He himself had been a pole vaulter in high school and college. His department had recently changed the shifts from twenty-four to forty-eight hours, making it harder for Kevin to be there for the high school kids as much as he wanted and believed he should. Prior to the shift change, he already was having a hard time accepting how his team had performed at the state championship the previous season. He regretted the way he prepared the team and kept beating himself up for not

producing better results and not being there for the kids at all times. With the shift change, he would need to be away from the kids for more than forty-eight hours at a time, and he no longer believed he could be successful coaching. As the new season was about to start, he said this would probably be the last year he coached. I told him that when you get stuck, you only have three choices: accept the situation just as it is, change, or remove yourself. Kevin said he had already accepted the shift change and there was nothing he could do about it. He would not remove himself and change careers. He liked his job, the income, and benefits, and he was close to retirement.

As I started to release trigger and large intestine acupuncture points in the spastic muscles of his lower back and abdomen, I talked to him about the cause of his pain. I asked, "What about change the way you think and what you believe?"

Kevin looked at me like he had no idea what I was talking about. So I explained, "Is it not true that you did the best you could with the time and resources you had at the time?"

He said, "Yes, I love to coach."

"Is it not true that you did what you believed best at the time you coached last season?"

Kevin nodded in agreement.

"Does the high school have any other coaches that know pole vaulting as you do?"

"No," he said. "No one else knows as much about pole vaulting as I do."

I continued, "If you stop coaching are you helping yourself or the kids?"

"Neither."

When belief systems don't serve us, we have to change them. I told Kevin, "You have to stop believing you are not good enough. Stop believing you do not have enough time to do well enough. Start thinking and believing that any time you have is a blessing that allows you to teach and pass on to the kids your knowledge and passion for pole vaulting. Start thinking how to get the most out of the time you have." I told him to change his definition of success. Success is not state championship gold medals, but rather doing the best you can with the resources you have. Learning from what works and what does not work. Using past results, win or loss, to learn and improve. Success is doing something you love and enhancing the lives of others. When I finished releasing his tension, Kevin got off the table free of pain and tension and full of excitement for coaching.

Debra, a fifty-three-year-old woman, came to my office with pain in her left front shoulder, upper arm, and biceps. Her ability to reach behind her with her arm was limited and moving her arm in this direction caused her sharp pain in her shoulder. I asked her what caused her injury, because everything always has a cause and an effect. She wasn't sure at first but thought it could be related to her and her husband moving two times in one year. She had to do most of the packing and lifting because her husband, who had Lou Gehrig's disease, was unable to help her. They had moved twice because as his

disease progressed, they needed a space that was wheelchair accessible and could accommodate his care. Their old house had stairs, so they moved to a rental while they remodeled a one-story house they bought. She stated that she was working as well at taking care of her husband, who needed more help as time passed. She also took care of their son's two children because their mother was not around. All this was going on when she started to experience pain and restricted movement in her left shoulder.

I found all Debra's tension in her biceps, shoulder, and chest muscles (deltoid, coraco brachialis, and pectoralis minor) - all common areas for a blockage in the lung meridian. Even though she did not experience any respiratory or lung problems, an imbalance between giving and receiving is often a symptom of the lung meridian. I asked her what she was doing for herself, and she told me there was no time for her to do anything for herself. She was trying to do everything for everyone else, and they expected her to keep doing more and more. Debra was trying to please everyone and did not want to accept that she could not do it all. She told me that her husband was upset with her for taking care of their grandkids. She felt bad for her son's situation and felt guilty if she did not help him with the grandchildren. I said she could not take care of everyone and everything at the expense of her own needs. Her physical pain was her body telling her to stop. I told her there is a reason why flight attendants tell you to put the oxygen mask on yourself before you help someone else – or both of you could die. You have to take care of yourself first, and balance your giving with receiving. As I released all Debra's muscle tension and restored her shoulder range of motion, I said it is very important that she take time out for herself and take care of herself or her body will continue to break down and she could bring disease on herself. Debra understood the cause of her pain, accepted that she needed to take care of herself and that she could not please everyone else at all times. When she left, she could move her arm freely and her pain had almost completely vanished.

Any symptom of pain, dysfunction, or disease is related to an accumulation of tension (stress) and a blockage of circulation (Chi). The following symptoms are commonly related to a fall imbalance and a blockage of circulation in the large intestine or lung meridians:

- Coughing, asthma, and bronchitis.
- Spasm of the throat.
- Pneumonia.
- Allergies.
- Lymphatic congestion.
- Swelling or dryness of mucous membranes.
- Mucus drainage.
- Nasal congestion.
- Dry skin, eczema, psoriasis, and rashes.
- Constipation.
- Bloating.

- Diarrhea.
- Lower back pain or rigidity (lumbago).
- Chest and upper back pain.
- Shoulder and deltoid problems.
- Tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis).
- Pain in thumb and or index finger.
- Neck pain.
- Tension headaches.

How to Achieve Balance in Fall

In the Four Seasons metaphor our harvest is synonymous with accepting, learning, asking, and receiving. The ability to do these four things is essential to balance in the fall season, but they aren't always easy.

Accepting what is, accepting reality, is easy when things happen just the way you expected or desired. It becomes much harder when the unexpected or unacceptable happens. Many people, in the face of unavoidable and unpreventable hardships, want to resist. They might say, "This is not right; this is not fair." But how can you argue that something shouldn't have happened when it did? How do you know something is supposed to happen? When it does! How do you know something is not supposed to happen? When it doesn't!

This means that I believe that everything that is supposed to happen will happen when it is meant to happen. I believe God's will is done. Not mine or yours or anyone else's. How could anyone know for a fact what's best for them? They can't! When it comes to accepting reality, you really have no choice. If you do not accept, learn, and move on, you will get stuck in the past and life will go on without you anyway. The longer you are stuck, the longer you suffer, and nothing can change what has already happened. Your only choice for health and harmony is to accept that you are exactly where you are supposed to be, doing exactly what you are supposed to do, and learning exactly what you are supposed to learn.

If you focus on what you can learn from every life experience, desired or undesired, then there are no mistakes. The only mistake is failure to learn. If we always do the best we can based on time, resources, and present belief systems, how could we possibly do anything more than that? If we always do our best and always learn, then we will continue to grow and mature. This is true success: the more we learn the greater sense of accomplishment and the greater sense of self-esteem.

It is essential that we ask and request from others to have our needs met. To have closure, understanding, and empathy in any relationship, asking - and not assuming - is essential. We cannot

assume that our loved ones, friends, and co-workers should know what we need. Everyone lives in his or her own universe and has his/her own reality. There is no way we can fully know or understand why someone did or did not do something; it is simply our assumption. By asking and requesting from others without being demanding or inflicting guilt trips, we stand a much greater chance of harvesting our needs.

When the harvest is ripe the farmer has to go out and bring it in. It doesn't get into the barn by itself, and if left out on the fields, the crops would rot.

To successfully bring in a harvest one often needs to ask for assistance; everyone helping out will experience a harvest in the accomplishment.

With accomplishments (harvesting) comes self-esteem and a greater sense of worthiness. Take time to feel good about what you accomplish. Practice receiving; help, gifts, and compliments by accepting them and just saying thank you. Not receiving gifts could be a very selfish act, because in doing so you rob the giver of the joy of giving. Think about how you feel if someone rejects your gift. Like everything else, gifts come to us for a reason. You might have spent years working on a field without yielding a harvest, and then an unexpected gift comes from nowhere. The universal law of sowing and reaping does not have set rules on where the harvest will come from. It just says, "As you sow, so shall you reap."

There once was a man of strong faith who lived in a small town that was getting flooded. As all the townspeople started to evacuate, he just stood in front of his house and watched. A truck drove by the man and the driver yelled out, "Hop on, the flood is coming."

The man replied, "No, thank you, I am waiting for God to save me." Hours later the man was still standing with water up to his waist and a small boat came by. The boat driver yelled out, "Hop aboard, the flood is rising fast. You will drown."

The man answered, "No thank you I am waiting for my God to rescue me." The flood kept rising and the man had moved up to his rooftop when a rescue helicopter flew by. The pilot threw down a rope and yelled, "Grab on or you will drown."

The man yelled back, "No, thank you, I have faith my God will save me."

The man did indeed drown, and upon entering the pearly gates of heaven he told God, "Oh Lord, how could you forsake me? I had faith and waited for you to rescue me."

God, slightly annoyed, answered, "I sent you a truck, a boat, and a helicopter, but you would not go."

When you block a gift, you block the universal blessings of sowing and reaping. How do you know you are worthy of a gift? You know when it is given to you! Do not stop another blessing.

For full and complete information about the Fall metaphor as well as all self improvement applications, buy and read the book; "The Four Seasons Way of Life, Ancient Wisdom for Personal Growth".