

Spring

In the spring, the farmer spreads manure, collected over the year from his livestock, onto his fields. He turns the soil over, and then takes his best seeds and plants them.

In the Four Seasons metaphor, spring is associated with birth, new beginnings, fertilization, and planting. Spring is the metaphoric beginning or start of a cycle of time. This cycle could be of any duration of time, from a few seconds to years or decades.

Spring is our own birth as well as the beginning of a new day, week or year.

Spring is the start of a conversation, the conception of a bright idea or goal, a commitment or decision to do something, as well as the beginning of any task.

Every moment is a new beginning. Everything you say, think, or do right now, is a “seed” planted and the beginning of a new “Four Seasons” metaphor of time.

All seeds grow into something, whether good or bad. By being present, aware and assertive, and by taking responsibility for this, you can actually direct your life to bring what you need instead of just being a victim of circumstances or blaming others. So every beginning is a spring, and to be successful in the future, we must be clear in the present – be clear on what we’re going to plant, our intent for that planting, what’s important to do, and why it’s important. Since our purpose, intent and direction is energy set in motion, it is of most importance to know your purpose, intent and direction in everything you think, say and do. We must be assertive in communicating our needs so the message we give others clearly reflects our intention.

Choose Your Seed

We are responsible for the outcome of what we say, think and do. We are responsible for our decisions. As adults in a free country, we are even responsible for the outcome of decisions we let others make for us. It is important to be clear on the intention of what we say or think, the direction of where we go, and the purpose of what we do. We need to choose impeccable words, thoughts and actions, since we will reap what we sew.

Fertilize Your Soil

Life experiences from our past that we perceived as bad, are fertilizers that serve us well in our future growth. Negative life experiences might stink at first, but they will ultimately serve a purpose. To be in balance with our internal “spring” we need to use unwanted experiences from our past to gain

clarity about what is true for us and what we need to continue to grow. As we start each new day, past experiences, good or bad, help us see what we need and what we do not need, as well as what approaches worked and which ones did not work. When things don't work out the first time, we can get clearer on what we need and how to get it done. By processing how your negative experiences can serve you, you “spread the manure”. This is how you fertilize your “soil” to get clear on what you need. When we change our approach each time we don't get the results we need, by process of elimination our chance of getting it right increases each “spring”. In this way by changing our approach, we can improve and grow. Not changing (fertilizing) our approach when something is not working will cause us to be stuck repeating the same negative life experience over and over. This will cause our emotions to become toxic, filling us with anger and resentment, judgment and blame of others or circumstances.

Are you completely clear on what you need to do, what your priority is, and your purpose for doing it? Some people think through these questions at the start of every day. Others have no idea, and at the end of the day they often find themselves somewhere they don't want to be.

The metaphor of spring is derived from the ancient healing art of acupuncture and related to the gall bladder and liver reflex points. A person with an imbalance in their inner “spring” will show the symptoms and emotions described below. Balanced emotions for the spring metaphor are calmness and feeling present and assertive. Anytime a person is not balanced in spring, he or she will experience negative emotions and feelings. They will either experience feelings of a hypo-active nature, such as depression, passivity, passive-aggressiveness, unassertiveness. Or they will experience feelings of a hyper-active nature, such as anxiety, irritation, frustration, or anger. Your emotions and feelings can be your most important clues to the season in which an imbalance exists in your life. A person with an imbalance in the spring will tend to have too little spring or too much spring. In ancient Chinese philosophy: too little and too much are both harmful.

Too little spring is often characterized by the following patterns.

- Not asserting one's own needs. Not knowing or being clear on those needs.
- Not speaking up, or speaking with a quiet, meek voice.
- Having a hard time making decisions.
- Not knowing how to say no.
- Procrastinating.
- Being a “pushover,” letting others tell them what to do, avoiding confrontation at any price.
- “Beating around the bush,” not getting to the point when communicating.
- Having a hard time getting angry, or having a slow burning fuse.
- Holding anger inside, holding grudges, not forgiving or taking responsibility for one's situation.
- Being passive-aggressive, holding all anger in until it finally erupts out of control, or getting physically ill and experiencing physical pain.

- Avoid stating one's own viewpoint, not wanting to upset others, and therefore communicating the viewpoint they think others want to hear.

Too much spring is often characterized by the following patterns.

- Feeling irritated, frustrated or angry.
- Continuing to do everything over the same way even though it did not (bring a harvest) work in the past.
- Passing judgments or blame on others for not having one's own needs met.
- Speaking with a firm, hard, and sometimes angry voice.
- Trying to force things to happen.
- Saying yes or no and jumping to conclusions or judgments too fast.
- Agreeing to do things you do not want to do and being angry about it.
- Making decisions too hastily without proper clarity or motive.
- Being overly judgmental and hence closed to new experiences.
- Being overly confrontational, sometimes picking fights or bullying others to get one's own way.
- Being bossy, thinking one always knows best and telling everyone what to do, while disliking being told by others.
- Getting frustrated or irritated when others don't get to the point, or when people are slow to getting it.
- Being ruled by constant eruptions of anger and being unable to control one's temper.
- Always knowing what's best.

Here are some common symptoms when the spring is out of balance and a blockage exists in the liver or gall bladder meridian:

- Eye problems, conjunctivitis, and other more severe problems.
- Dryness or tearing of the eyes.
- Twitching of muscles around the eyes.
- Tension headaches from the lateral neck into the base of the head (occipital) and temples.
- Migraine headaches often affecting the sight (lights, black spots, etc.).
- Disorders affecting equilibrium (balance).
- Dizziness and vertigo.
- Nausea.
- Pain in the lateral (sides of) neck and top of shoulders.
- Pain between the shoulder blades (right side more common).
- Tenderness in the pectoral region (anterior chest wall, especially the right side).
- Pain radiating into the right shoulder and arm.
- Intolerance or craving of greasy food.
- Intolerance and/or addiction to alcohol, often causing anger or rage.

- Fullness and gas after eating fatty food.
- Pain in the right lower ribcage.
- High cholesterol.
- Abdominal pain.
- Toxic conditions.
- Jaundice.
- Allergies affecting the eyes.
- Lateral (sides of) lower back pain.
- Lateral (sides of) hip pain.
- Pain along the lateral thigh, lower leg, and ankle.
- Medial knee pain at the site of the medial meniscus or medial collateral ligament.
- Twitching, numbness, and pain along the outside (lateral side) of the torso, legs, and feet.

The following three patient cases illustrate what could happen when a person is out of balance with their inner “spring”.

Nadia came to my office because she had hit dead ends with everything she tried to relieve her pain. She complained of pain in her right upper trapezius (a muscle that connects the top of the shoulders with the side of the neck and head) that was shooting into the back portion of her head and temple. She was forty-seven years old at the time, and she'd been experiencing the symptoms which began three years prior to her visit. Over that time, the pain in her trapezius gradually got worse, leading to the headaches that she had been experiencing for at least a year. Any activity where she moved her arms and shoulders made her pain worse. She claimed that she had a hard time falling asleep both due to the pain and inability to shut down her mind. She tried acupuncture as well as conventional medicine before she came to my practice. Her doctor had given up on finding a therapy that would work and finally diagnosed her with fibromyalgia.

When I started asking her questions about other possible symptoms, I suspected she was blocked in spring. She said she experienced right hip pain that had lately started getting worse. She claimed that greasy and oily food made her nauseous and bloated. She claimed that she disliked wind and that her neck and shoulder problems got worse when she was exposed to wind. Nadia had a big dog - over 100 pounds - that pulled on his leash when she walked him. She held the leash with her right hand and often became frustrated with the dog when he pulled. She thought that the strain from walking her dog could be causing her neck and shoulder pain, but she also recognized that her symptoms were worse when she was under stress - a big clue that these physical problems were actually manifestations of her behavior and interactions with other people in her life.

Upon questioning, she admitted that she had been under a lot of stress over the last three years. She was holding in a lot of anger and resentment towards her husband (passive-aggressive). She claimed he was selfish and stubborn, and as we continued to talk I found out that she does not speak up, was unable to set boundaries, and actually enabled her dysfunctional marriage. She was tip-toeing

around her husband, avoiding being honest and speaking up for herself, to avoid his outbursts of anger. She constantly found herself going along with things she really did not want to, and subsequently did not like the outcome of her life. She said they should never have gotten married, and she told me that she was carrying the divorce papers in her purse but was unable to make up her mind about whether she should file them or not. This inability to make a decision was frustrating her.

As I released gall bladder acupuncture points and trigger points (muscle knots) in her chest, shoulder, and neck, I suggested making some changes in the way she dealt with others. I told her that she needed to be calm, assertive, clear, and honest with her husband. She needed to state her boundaries or she would always find herself in life situations she didn't like. She needed to own up to her reality because she trained or allowed others to push her around by not speaking up in the first place. She was not walking her dog; he was walking her because she was not present, calm, and assertive in her body language and communication. Likewise, she had allowed her husband to overstep her boundaries for years.

She came back two weeks later and was happy to report that her life had improved. The headaches were gone and her neck pain and tension greatly decreased. She was present, calm, and assertive when walking her dog and she did not allow him to pull his leash. Therefore, her dog recognized that she was in charge and stopped pulling. She had also filed her divorce papers and continued to calmly and assertively state her boundaries with her husband. She recognized that whenever she did not speak up clearly in a matter, she could feel the muscle tension in her neck and shoulders coming on. By changing her behaviors and regaining her balance in spring, Nadia got clear on what she needed, stood up for herself, asserted her boundaries, and dramatically decreased the pain and suffering she had been experiencing for so many years.

Spring is a metaphorical start, and when things aren't started at the right time and under the right conditions, that in itself can lead to problems. Rory, a fifty-year-old man and owner of a glass company, came to see me for pain in his neck, shoulders, and between his shoulder blades (upper trapezius and rhomboids). I asked him when his pain started; Rory told me it was on Monday morning when he had a bad start to his workweek. I asked him what happened. He told me that he had a huge glass job starting that day and he'd made sure to have enough workers and his supplier had assured him that all the sheets of glass would be delivered early that Monday morning. When Rory came to work Monday morning, he discovered that the supplier had failed to deliver the glass as promised. Because of this, the job had to be delayed. That was when Rory started to experience his pain.

I told Rory that the symptoms were related to an imbalance in the spring and gall bladder, and I asked him if he got angry and how he handled it. Rory said that in the past he would have been exploding, yelling, screaming, cursing, and kicking. As he got older, he had learned to temper his anger so he wouldn't make himself look like a fool. So I asked him if he got angry when the supplier did not deliver as promised. He said inside he felt like he was blowing a gasket, but instead of getting outwardly angry, he became passive-aggressive and resorted to sarcastic remarks. I told him the tension that

comes from anger often settles in the muscles of the neck, shoulders, and upper back. Keeping his cool and avoiding outward rage was an improvement, but holding his anger inside could cause not only tension and pain but high blood pressure as well, which could be dangerous to his heart. Rory admitted that he had high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

I told Rory that spring stands for starting a job, keeping a commitment, and having integrity. But in life, spring does not always start when it is supposed to, and sometimes things happen that we have no control over. I said there is nothing you can do if you don't get a promised delivery. You can choose to hire another supplier in the future. Rory said he had been in business for over twenty years, and this was the only supplier that could handle this kind of order. I asked him how he knows that he's starting a job on time. He seemed confused. I replied that you're starting a job on time when you have everything you need to get started. This is the nature of business and life. Other people do not always deliver what they promise, so you have to go with the flow. "If the job is not meant to start," I said to him, "it is not meant to start." As I released painful gall bladder acupressure points in Rory's neck and shoulders, I was "planting a seed" in his mind by telling him that his behavior was the cause of his pain. I told Rory that if he did not learn to stay calm and assertive, to forgive others' shortcomings, and to change his plans when circumstances change, it could cost him his health or ultimately his life. Rory left free of tension and pain with a commitment to himself to change his behavior.

Robert, a 53 year old male, came limping into my office with his back bent to the right. He described pain that became worse when sitting, and since his business required a lot of driving, the pain had been really bad for three weeks. It was also painful for him to turn over in bed; he had to roll over onto his belly and get on all four to get out of the bed in the mornings. Even though he was limping when he walked, he said he actually felt less pain while walking.

When I asked how this started, he said he had been working more hours lately that required lifting and driving a lot. As I probed further, he told me he was starting up his own company and was working ten plus hours a day repairing race boats. He was exhausted when he got home after work, and all he could do was go straight to bed, only to get up and do the same thing the next day again. He custom built his shop into a van, so he drove to his customers instead of them coming to him.

The pain had started on the outside of his left thigh and knee. He thought he might have favored his left side by leaning more to the right and using his right side more. When he came to me, his pain had switched sides and was now all in his right hip and outside thigh all the way down to his knee. When he got out of bed or tried to lean his torso to the left, he also felt a deep pain in the small of his low back, which radiated into his right hip.

I started to release tension in muscles and acu-points along his gall bladder meridian on his outside thigh, hip and lateral low back (vastus lateralis, tensor fascia latae, gluteus minimus and quadratus lumborum). While I was working on him, I continued to inquire as to what might have been the cause for those muscles to hold so much tension and go into spasm. I asked him if he had a hard time saying no to his customers, or if he held anger, frustration or irritation - both symptoms of an imbalance in the gall bladder meridian. He said he did. He had a hard time saying no to some jobs due to

persistent or manipulative customers. I told him if he did not know how to state his boundaries, say no to jobs that he did not want to do because they were insignificant or not worth his time, he would never have enough hours in a day. Suspecting he was passive aggressive, I cautioned him that continuing to do jobs he did not want to do would cause him tension and pain, making him resentful, irritable and exhausted.

Robert got quiet for a minute, and then he said you are more right than you know. I love what I do repairing race boats. I am good at it and it is my passion. What I did not tell you is that I was doing this business once before, 8 years ago. One of my customers asked me to do something with his boat that I said would not work. He continued to persuade me and even though I did not think it would work I did what he asked me to. When it turned out that it did not work he turned around and sued me. I got so angry that I gave up the business and practice I loved. For eight years I worked in another field and did alright, but I missed my passion and love for working on race boats. I just started the business up again...

“And here you are again suffering for not saying no and for doing jobs you do not want to do,” I said. “If you do not change your way and start to say no, you can lose your love and passion again.” Robert walked out of my office free of pain, with a straight back and without a limp.

Your New Beginning

Whatever you think, say, or do is a seed you plant. The seed's principle purpose is to multiply. So, what goes around comes around, or as you sow, so shall you reap. If you are present, assertive, impeccable, and clear on what you think, say, and do, there are no limits to what you can harvest. And knowing how to harvest and meet the needs you have in your life by design on a regular basis is essential. Everyone could sometimes stumble into something great. Through life, if you want to consistently be able to grow and harvest, have peace of mind, radiant health and success, you must take responsibility for your own thoughts, spoken words, and actions. Realize that every moment and every word and every thought and everything you do has consequences. By being present and keeping your actions, words, and thoughts impeccable by planting your best seed, you will enhance your life and the lives of others.

Spring represents a new beginning, and being clear on what you need, your boundaries and setting ground rules right from the start are paramount. Entering new relationships, having children, or getting a puppy are all situations that benefit from this. Entering new contracts and agreements are best done in writing to make sure both parties are clear on purpose, obligations, and direction.

Every present moment can be a new beginning and a new spring. It could be the beginning of something great based on your present thoughts, your present action, and the present words you speak. And that's why it's so important to be present and assertive and think about what you need, what to do, what you think, and what you say.

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