

Summer

In the summer the farmer waters and weeds his fields. He labors in love as he inspects his fields daily with joy, because he anticipates a rich harvest.

In the four seasons of nature, summer is associated with watering, weeding, blooming, and flourishing. Summer is a time of blooming flowers and lush landscapes. It's a time full of life and buzzing energy. Gardeners tend the seeds they've planted, and enjoy watching them grow and bloom into something beautiful. The days are long and warm, and all the preparations and work done in spring start to pay off.

In the Four Seasons metaphor, summer stands for being engaged, being passionate, loving life, being connected with your heart, being enthusiastic, being inspired, having fun, having joy, and playing. All this is important because it allows the seeds (needs) you planted in spring to grow and strengthen and eventually yield fruit. Obviously, if you don't plant the right seeds in spring, you won't feel the joy that's possible in summer. And if you don't do the weeding and watering throughout the summer, you won't have a positive harvest in the fall.

Everything in life has a summer. It's like the middle of the day, the time from when you decided to start working on something to when you finish working on it. And during this time it's very important to be able to see what's good and what's bad to weed out obstacles, to stay authentic, to be true to your heart, to be engaged, and to be passionate about what you do. So when you're at work, completing the tasks of your day, how do you feel? Do you feel energized? Do you feel like you're "in the zone"? Or do you feel bored? Or anxious? Some people are so engaged in, and enjoying what they do that the hours pass in a flash, while others feel like time drags on when they're working and laboring in something they do not enjoy - when we are all living the seeds we planted. If you don't have passion and love for what you're doing and you're not engaged in it, then your summer is out of balance. It would be like marrying someone you don't really love, like, or enjoy, and you have no passion. Yes, you can try to fake it and act like everything is fine, but it's not going to work out. You'll never harvest happiness. It's like planting seeds and not enjoying the watering and weeding. You can't anticipate a harvest, because it's hard to be happy when you're married to the wrong person. Just like a high jumper - if you're running up towards the bar and you don't believe you can make the jump, why do you even waste your time and energy trying? Any task, labor, or relationship where one does not anticipate or believe in a harvest is fruitless. If you're disengaged and melancholic and life feels like a chore, or you are faking being in to it and forcing yourself to do something, then you can improve your life by aligning your thoughts and activities with the ancient wisdom of the summer metaphor.

The metaphoric inner "summer" is the time from when you started something, "planted" to when there is a completion or outcome. Just like with the metaphoric time duration of "spring", the "summer" can last a few seconds to days, years or decades. There is always an outcome of any activity or time spent, and this outcome is your "harvest". For this time to bring fruition and a bountiful harvest

to your liking you need to labor in love. The “summer” phase is the journey rather than the destination. Life is a journey rather than a destination. A balanced summer is living life and loving it. Most of the time we spend and all the activities we do are in “summer”.

This means we need to do what we love or find a way to love what we do; if not, our labor will be fruitless. For example, Ann, a fifty-year-old woman with pain and numbness in her chest and wrist, had been married for twenty-seven years and had adult children and a grandchild. She enjoyed her status, home, and family, but she had to pretend that she loved and respected her husband. She had not been true to her heart, authentic, or genuine in her relationship with him for over twenty years. She had pretended for so long that she was not in touch with her own heart, and her behavior had affected both her and her husband’s health. As I released the tension in her tight muscles, the realization that her behavior was the cause of her tension and bodily pain hit her like a ton of bricks.

Balance in Summer

Spring is always followed by summer. And being successful in this season means being engaged, present, and passionate about whatever you're doing. It means tending the seeds you've planted, enjoying that process, while expecting or anticipating a bountiful harvest in fall. When you picture a balanced summer, imagine a flower blossoming and flourishing, a person that is enthusiastic about their life and what they do. The balanced summers look at the bright side of life, and always see the glass as half full. They are active and engaged at work, in their relationships, and whatever they do. They are authentic, energetic, active, positive, and inspirational. These people are warm; full of fire, energy, and vitality; lively; and colorful.

People who are balanced in their summer enjoy their work and feel energized. They focus on the solution (what they want - watering), instead of the problem (what they don't want - weeds). They sort out (weeding) disturbing thoughts and negative attitudes, staying focused on what they are doing without being disturbed or distracted by other people's attitudes or activities. They give their full attention to the task at hand while maintaining their joyful positive attitude. They always expect a successful outcome in whatever they get involved with or they would not get involved.

Those who are balanced summer do not take what others say and do personally. They are not jealous, but rather excited and happy for the success of others. They inspire and support others through their positive attitude. They are experts at communicating and verbalizing their thoughts, and feelings. People who are balanced in summer communicate authentically, and their actions match their words. They say what they do and they do what they say. They can express how they feel and what is alive in them, speaking from the heart. A balanced summer individual is the same person all the time, not a phony or fake, changing when in different circumstances or with different people.

Unbalanced summers are those who act or pretend to be what they think others want them to be; they pretend to know what they are talking about and act as if everything in their life is fine and

their crop is growing when it may or may not be. In some cases, they could be so good at deceiving that they believe themselves. A balanced summer is able to discern, “weed out” what is phony or fake.

Michelle, a fifty-five-year-old woman, came to me for a second visit to relieve post-surgery pain in her right shoulder. She had a rotator cuff repair eight months before. Her condition had greatly improved since the surgery, but she still experienced pain in the back portion of her shoulder, especially when she reached with her arm straight up over her head. She explained that she had felt great when she left the last visit and she had done all her exercises faithfully to stretch the shortened muscles and strengthen weakened muscles. Yet her condition gradually came back and was still lingering. She said her shoulder clicked when she reached over her head and there was discomfort and light pain. She was unable to do a single push-up without pain. She also informed me that her shoulder and neck felt stiff.

Michelle owned and coached at a gymnastic school and frequently had to lift and spot young gymnasts and children in their gymnastic activities. Michelle was a happy, optimistic, full-of-life woman who I had known through her different activities and phases over the last twenty years - including power lifting, water skiing, belly dancing, and yoga. Michelle had always been passionate and fully engaged in her relationships, her life, her hobbies, and her work. When I examined her range of motion and tested her muscles to determine where she held her tension, I discovered that the condition was exactly the same as when I saw her four months prior. The same muscles were contracted and they were all along the small intestine and heart meridians. I asked her if her neck ever got so tight that it was hard to move it. She said that some days she could hardly turn her head. I asked if she had any ringing in her ear or jaw pain, and she said that lately she experienced intermittent ringing in her ear. When I told her that the blockage was in the small intestine meridian (the system responsible for separating the pure from the impure in our bodies), the heart meridian, and in the summer season, she said she never had anything wrong with her heart, that her blood pressure and cholesterol were fine. She thought her intestines were fine as well because she did not have any problems with her appetite, digestion, or elimination. I told her the heart meridian was related to communication and being true to your heart. If a person did not separate pure from impure, discern authentic from phony, and truth from lies it could cause tension and impurities in the small intestine meridian.

That's when she told me that she was the president on the board of a nonprofit organization that focused on raising spiritual awareness worldwide. On the surface, the position seemed to align with Michelle's passions and desire to make the world a better place by increasing spiritual awareness. Six months before, her organization joined forces with a similar organization, but she'd not been aware that the board was fraught with hypocritical games of egos. Michelle was very upset over the fact that the words of the other organization's president didn't match his actions. She found his actions to be hypocritical and she felt they were wasting their time. Because of this, she had lost her passion and excitement and did not think the organization would get things accomplished. She wanted to tell everyone involved exactly what she felt, but at the same time she did not want to hurt the other members and her friends on her board or take away their excitement. She had lost her passion was depressed and felt stuck.

As I worked on her and released the tension in one reflex point at a time Michelle came to the realization that she had to be true to her heart and herself. If she did not feel the people she had to deal with were authentic, if she did not believe them, if their action did not match what they said, she could not put her heart and energy into this cause. She left the visit with full pain-free range of motion and strength in her shoulder, without any clicking, and the realization that she could only be engaged in this organization if she believed in the people she worked with and believed they could accomplish their mission. She e-mailed me a couple of weeks later to tell me she'd addressed all her issues with her board, as well as the board and president of the other organization. And she told me she was able to do ten push-ups for the first time in a year without pain. I could tell from her e-mail that her passion and engagement in her cause were back.

Balanced emotions for the summer metaphor are calmness, joyfulness and pleasure - a feeling of being present, authentic and true to one's heart. Anytime a person is not balanced in summer, he or she will experience negative emotions of either hypoactive nature, such as depression, melancholy, or joylessness (dull, lifeless), or hyperactive nature, such as anxiety, over-excitement, or frenzy (hypocritical, fake, or phony).

A person with an imbalance in the summer will tend to be too little summer or too much summer. Remember in ancient Chinese philosophy too little or too much are both harmful. You can kill a plant both by watering it too much or by not watering it enough.

The too little summer behavior is often characterized by the following patterns:

- Having an inability to express feelings, needs or what is alive in one's self. Lacking passion and disconnection with the heart (spirit).
- Difficulty concentrating at one thing, frequently failing to follow through.
- Not staying focused for any length of time and getting distracted easily (under-focused, depressive).
- Lacking enthusiasm and action, depression, joylessness, melancholy, or gloominess about life (often reflected in how a person dresses.)
- Talking very little, and if they do talk, it comes out slow and reluctantly.
- Experiencing a hard time getting needs, thoughts, messages and feelings across.
- Seldom laughing.
- Not staying present in the here and now, becoming fatigued, melancholic or depressed and often spacing out or day dreaming.
- Often craving nicotine, caffeine or chocolate as artificial energy to make it through the day.
- Disliking what they are doing, often showing in appearance.
- Believing that dreams are for dreamers, that storybook myths never come true.

- Disliking work and lack of energy cause their crop to be strangled by weeds, overcome by negative obstacles. The crop dies from not being “watered,” lacking positive expectations.

Too much summer is often characterized by the following patterns:

- Talking too much without connecting with the heart.
- Trying to do everything at once, jumping from one thing to another; consequently wasting energy and time.
- Never staying still long enough to focus.
- Being over-enthusiastic, bordering on manic or frenzied, often too colorful and flashy in appearance and manner of dress (look at me).
- Not having the ability to stop talking, talking too fast and still not getting needs, message, thoughts or feelings across.
- Taking action that does not match one’s words.
- Not having the ability to discern or filter what one is saying, hence putting “foot in mouth” frequently.
- Not listening, but rather thinking of what to say next.
- Talking and laughing a lot, but little or nothing actually gets done.
- Acting frenzied or anxious.
- Often getting too hyper on coffee, cigarettes or chocolate.
- Being phony, fake and pretending to like what one is doing, pretending to know what one is talking about, and that one’s dreams are coming true.
- Being unrealistic and believing in one’s own illusions.
- Killing the crop by over watering it (over doing, over selling or over talking).

Douglas, a fifty-three-year-old man, came to me with several seemingly unrelated complaints of pain that turned out to be symptoms of an imbalance in the heart and small intestine meridians. He had sharp pain in his left inner forearm and little finger, which he said came from over-doing it when playing his piano. He said that he was practicing and trying to master a hard classical piece and had to spread his fingers wide and push with force on the keys. He had played for hours every day for over a week. In that time, the pain in his little finger and forearm flexor muscle got so intense that he had to stop playing the piano. He had taken a week-long break, but still experienced pain when he attempted to play the piano. He also experienced a burning pain in his shoulder blade area. This pain was aggravated when he was sitting in front of his computer or piano. This pain alleviated if he stood up. His final complaints were ringing in his ears and pain in his jaw that he believed came on after having four molar teeth removed at one time about three years ago.

When I tested the strength of the little finger flexor muscle (a muscle that curls the little finger into a fist), he was clearly weak. This test also elicited the same pain that he experienced when playing the piano. The middle and lower trapezius (muscles that hold the shoulder blades back and keep the

upper body from slouching forward) also tested weak. I released the tension in trigger points and muscles on the heart and small intestine meridians in his forearm, shoulder blade area, neck, and jaw. After the treatment the patient was strong on the previously weak tests and did not experience any pain in his little finger, forearm, shoulder blade, or jaw area. However, this didn't solve Douglas's true problem.

When he came back two weeks later, Douglas had improved, but was still experiencing some symptoms. He expressed that his shoulder blade and jaw pain were gone as was the ringing in his ears. He avoided playing the piano for five days after the treatment then started to play easy pieces, not playing the complex classical piece he was practicing when he first got injured. He felt only a slight pain that then subsided. This encouraged him. The following day he started to practice the hard classical piece again and after about thirty minutes his sharp pain in the little finger and forearm returned. I told him that when the pain of an injury was removed with therapy followed by rest, he should get better - a scab will heal unless you keep picking it. The fact that his pain returned made me believe something else was going on in Douglas's life that was causing the problem.

The hardest thing about helping patients is figuring out what the person is doing, thinking, or believing that caused the injury to return. It could be just a physical stressor, such as over-use or trauma, it could be an emotional or mental stressor, or it could be some combination of both factors. In this case, only the patient's left little finger and forearm were injured even though he used both hands equally. So I started to inquire about what happened when he first got injured. Why was he playing this difficult piece for so many hours and for so many days straight? He said he had committed to a date for recording the piece, but mastering it was harder than he expected. He wasn't improving fast enough to meet his commitment. I asked him how he felt when the music did not come out the way he wanted, and he said he felt anxious, frustrated, and disappointed. Then we started talking about why he plays the piano in the first place.

His face broke into a smile and he said, "Because I love the way it sounds and I love how it feels."

I said, "Did you love how it sounded and how you felt when you were practicing that advanced classical piece for hours every day?"

He got quiet for a minute; then he said, "No, it did not sound good, and I did not feel good." He kept playing though, in order to meet his deadline for recording, and in doing so lost touch with the reason he loved playing the piano. As I kept talking to him, I found out that he got stuck on the same place every time he practiced this classical piece. It was a difficult passage where he had to reach to the far left and spread his fingers wide when hitting the key hard with his little finger. As he was playing along fine, he started thinking about that tricky part of the difficult passage - he stopped being present and started worrying about screwing up. He got more and more frenzied trying to force his performance to work, and as he kept repeating the same mistake over and over he started to get a sharp pain in his left little finger and forearm.

I told him that the injury was along his heart meridian, and by forcing his performance, he was not

having fun and he was not playing from his heart. An activity that he passionately loved had turned into forced, frustrating, painful labor.

I released the trigger points and tight muscles along the heart meridian one more time, until all tension and pain were removed. Then I told him to go home and practice his piano piece again, but this time he had to stop playing immediately, if it did not sound good or if he did not feel good playing.

"I'll never meet my deadline that way," he said.

"That is not what's important. What is important is that you play from your heart and love it," I explained. "The moment it does not sound good or feel good, you will stop playing (weeding). But do not leave the piano. Sit with your eyes closed, and visualize yourself playing the piece perfectly (watering). See yourself playing effortlessly, being present with passion from your heart. See how your fingers move effortlessly to hit the keys with perfect timing. Feel your fingers touching the keys. Hear how beautiful it sounds, and feel how good it feels to play the piece. Play the piece in your mind perfectly three times; then play it for real again. Every time it does not sound or feel good, stop immediately and practice the piece three times perfectly in your mind. You can play as much as you want to as long as you stop as soon as it does not sound or feel good."

The patient came back for his third visit two weeks later and told me that amazingly he had not had any pain playing the classical piece. He also stated that his fingers found the keys far out to the left without him even looking at them. His wife and her friend had entered the room when he was playing from his heart and they were moved to tears by his music. He brought me a CD with the classical piece recorded for me to enjoy. He told me that he now is a better piano player because of this injury. The injury, as they often can be, was his friend and teacher.

The metaphor of summer is derived from ancient Chinese acupuncture and related to the heart, small intestine, triple warmer and pericardium acu-points and meridians. Here are some common symptoms when the summer is out of balance and a blockage exists in one or more of these meridians:

- High or low blood pressure.
- Decreased circulation in hands or feet.
- Dysfunction of arteries or veins.
- Metabolic disorders (hyper- or hypo- metabolism).
- Hyper- or hypo-thermia.
- Hot flashes.
- Hyper- or hypo-libido.
- Chest pain.
- Inability to open up in love relationships.
- Indigestion.
- Diarrhea.
- Hemorrhoids.
- Spasms of the neck.

- Pain in the shoulder area.
- Pain in the shoulder blade and armpit.
- Ringing in the ears (tinnitus).
- TMJ (temporo-mandibular joint syndrome), clicking or locking jaw.
- Wrist and forearm pain.
- Pain, weakness or sensation in the long (3rd), ring (4th) and little (5th) finger.

How to Achieve Balance in Summer

Summer is the time between the start (spring) and the finish (fall). It is a time to labor in joy, anticipating a harvest. It is work, but it is supposed to be enjoyable and fun. We are supposed to be engaged and captured in our "summer activities." When we were kids, the summer activity was called play. When a particular game wasn't fun anymore we stopped playing. Then we grow up and the summer activity is now called work. Most people believe work is not supposed to be fun, when in fact the happiest, most radiant and successful people find a way to have fun in whatever work they do. "If you catch fire, people will come from miles to see you burn," is a phrase I once heard, illustrating how someone with passion for what they do will be very successful. A balanced summer person is authentic, engaged, and having fun and playing in whatever they do to truly labor in love.

Now, what if you did not pay attention to what you planted in spring, or if you were not clear, rushed to plant something, and now you realize you do not like your summer? If this is the case, then you are probably acting frenzied, faking that everything is fine and that you are going to harvest. Or, you feel melancholic and lifeless in what you do; you're not connected to your heart or believing in a harvest. When this happens, if you do not like what you are doing, you can change your attitude (weed). Start looking for something good, exciting, or positive in whatever you are doing. Whatever you focus on (water) will grow. This way you can find more joy and anticipate a harvest (more good).

If you cannot see anything to be excited or passionate about, you need to remove yourself. You can only fake it for so long, and not being authentic will cause stress, tension, pain and disease to yourself and others involved in your summer. At some point, you have to stop wasting your life. Remember at any present moment you can start a new cycle, planting new needs, goals, and dreams. Find joy and purpose in whatever you do or start something else you do want to do. This does not mean you quit your work immediately. You take the present moment (new beginning, spring) and start to come up with ideas on what to do. Get clear about what you need to feel engaged and passionate in a job or a career. Your body and mind will start to feel better as soon as you start to make plans for a new beginning. Then you keep your old work, being as authentic and engaged as you can until you have planned, committed, and are ready to start your new job. Our ego would like to tell us that the only way we can be successful is if we gain fame, fortune, and power with our job and career. The truth, however, is that fame, fortune, and power have nothing whatsoever to do with authentic passion, being engaged, and staying true to your heart. Remember the saying: "What good is it to gain the whole world if you have to sell your soul."

The same thing is true about exercise. Very often my patients tell me that they exercise and diet, but don't achieve results. I always ask them if they enjoy exercise, and they always tell me they hate it. If you cannot get passionately engaged in exercise and love your workout, then you will have little or no results. Often they hire a trainer or work out with a friend. But this can become more about socializing and less about being engaged and focused on the exercise. To get results and harvest fitness, it is absolutely essential that they find an exercise they love. I tell my patients that I do not believe in quick fix diets. A diet that is restricted and you resent might work short term but as soon as you go back to how you used to eat you will gain all weight back. The first three letters in diet is; "die" and the opposite of live. For a meal plan to work it must become a lifestyle that one can enjoy.

People who do not enjoy their work spend an excessive amount of time taking breaks, drinking coffee, smoking, and/or gossiping. If people do not find things to be authentically engaged and excited about in their jobs, they will eventually get fired from that job or get injured or sick so they no longer can do that work. I commonly see patients who were injured while employed in jobs they did not authentically enjoy; often these are chronic injuries that do not heal. Think about it: do they really want to go back to work if they do not enjoy what they do? Subconsciously they'd rather be injured than regain their health and return to a job they don't enjoy.

When people have been working in jobs for many years, and have benefits and retirement and security, they often think, "I'm too old to change jobs. I need my retirement. I have to keep working." When they get hurt at work, they still get paid from their worker's compensation. No wonder they don't heal. Why would they want to?

All work affects your summer, and if you don't like what you do, you need to realize this yourself. You need to either find or focus on something you like with it or remove yourself and go work (bloom) somewhere else.

Likewise, if you are committed in a relationship with a significant other and are not passionate or engaged, you need to focus on everything you like and enjoy about your partner. Whatever you water will grow. If you still cannot find enough to be authentically engaged in the relationship, there will never be a harvest. If this is the case, you may be wasting both your own and your partner's opportunities to flourish in a relationship with someone else.

Engaging in Your Present

If you were a gold miner deep in a mineshaft digging for gold, most certainly you would encounter a lot more dirt, mud, and rocks than gold. The fact is that if the world had more gold than rocks, then the rocks would have been more valuable. Rare things have great value. In your daily life, you will most likely have more rocks, dirt, and mud than you have gold. Just like the miner, you must keep your eye on the gold. The miner is deep down in a wet, cold, and muddy shaft. If he did not keep his eye and focus on the gold, believing he will make a great find, how would he otherwise keep going?

See the beauty in nature and all around you, focus on solutions instead of problems, exterminate the weeds, and water the crop. Overcome negative obstacles (weeding) by focusing on the

positive, the solution (watering). Be present and aware of your thoughts and attitude. If they are negative (weeds), exterminate them and replace them with a positive affirmation (water). Otherwise you're wasting your life. You're wasting your opportunity for happiness. Being authentic and true to your heart and watering, focusing on the positive - letting the positive occupy your mind - will let all the negativity and stress and misery in your life wither away.

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