



The Subtle Change of Season

Dear Friends,

Did you feel it? There was this very delicate change that took place around the first of August. There is a fifth season that comes between the fresh onset of heat that marks the beginning of summer, the blooming and brilliance that comes with summer, and the later season we call autumn, when the nights get frosty, the leaves turn red and fall off the trees. When I was a kid, I always knew this in-between season came and that it meant that school wasn't far off. I was often just a little bit bored with summer by then but not quite wanting school to start.

For us, this fifth season doesn't have an official name, sometimes we call it Indian Summer. In Five Element Acupuncture, this season is represented by the element of Earth. It is a time for the ripening of fruits and vegetables. It is still pretty, especially here in Seattle, but this season doesn't have the new freshness of the summer. Even when it is hot enough to go swimming, it feels different than summer. There are fewer flowers, the rains come more frequently, the nights are more chilly and there is more moisture in the dry earth. Mushrooms start to appear. In the woods, the spiders are starting to build webs across the trails, and I have to carry a stick to break them up when I walk in the morning.

There is a maternal quality to this season. If spring is childlike and represents a new beginning and summer is the heat of adolescence, now we are in the time when our Mother Earth bears fruit. It is a time of fullness and nourishment. I see her in a

yellow apron, like a field of wheat, singing and cooking, hanging out the laundry in the bright sun. She smells like a kitchen.

This season can also be a time of indolence, feeling stuck, feeling stubborn, and can bring up any negative feelings toward being nourished, overly nourished or under nourished, feelings that come from our own personal histories.

As I mentioned in the previous newsletter, the change of seasons is a time when we are more vulnerable to shifts in our equilibrium, to discomforts or even illnesses of our bodies, minds and spirits.

My practice of medicine is to help others as well as myself, to become more adept at moving through the natural process of the seasons of the sun as well as the seasons of our individual lives. As promised, I will try to bring seasonal newsletters. Many of you wrote with positive feedback and I look forward to more personal stories that we can share.

This is the way that nature heals.

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