

Balance in Summer

The beginning of summer (Wed. June 21 this year) is a natural time to pause and look back at the previous six months and forward to the time between now and the winter solstice. In this exuberant, active season, it is still important to connect with ourselves inwardly. At this expansive and extroverted Sun time, we need some Moon for balance--but not too much! The story of Goldilocks advises us to eat porridge that is not too hot and not too cold. Not too much sun/summer and not too much moon/winter.

As we move from early summer to late summer to fall, we will slowly shift from more active, opening sun qualities to quieter, reflective moon qualities as the days shorten. Looking ahead to the qualities of fall and winter can help us understand how to create better balance in our lives now.

We have many tools and strategies available to us for balancing the qualities and effects of the summer. Exploring where similar qualities exist can give us clues about those tools and their use. For instance, the inhalation, summer, back-bending and work/action have similar qualities. Look to their opposites for balance: the exhalation, winter qualities (coolness, stillness, quiet), forward bending, and surrender. Use a variety of these tools and strategies. Be balanced in your approach to creating better balance!

The movement from winter solstice to summer solstice is like a long, slow inhalation that reaches its fullness at the start of summer. Those inhalation qualities are then fully manifest in summer. Paying attention to your exhalations can subtly move you toward balance by keeping you connected to the exhalation's qualities: contraction, grounding, calming, downward movement, introspection. If you have a pranayama (breath) practice, there are many ways to use the breath to move you toward better balance, including Sitali, the cooling breath.

The expansion and contraction of the universe can be seen as a cosmic breath- the same primordial forces that we experience, but on a larger scale and over a greater expanse of time. We can feel connected to these great forces with every breath, helping us touch timelessness or eternity. Slowing down the breath can move us just a little bit in the direction of that bigger time scale and perspective.

In balancing these sets of qualities, we can experience the powerful combination of alertness and calmness/relaxation. The particular combination will vary from season to season, day to day, moment to moment (and individual to individual). Moment-to-moment awareness--what we call "being present"-- can connect us to this. Balancing the qualities of the seasons can help us learn the art of balancing.