

Autumn Glory: Creating Balance and Harmony in the Fall Season



By Juliana Swanson

Fall in the northern hemisphere commences on the autumnal equinox on Friday, September 23, at 1:03 AM UTC. (The autumnal equinox coincides with the vernal equinox in the southern hemisphere, which marks the beginning of springtime. Since I live in the northern half of the world, my focus in this article is on the fall season).

From the Latin "aequus" (equal) and "nox" (night), the equinox occurs when the Sun in its apparent path along the ecliptic crosses the celestial equator. On the equinox, day and night are of equal length all across the earth. The fall and spring equinoxes mark seasonal cycles as well as cycles within the human energy system. The two are very much connected via the Law of Correspondence, "As Above, So Below; As Within, So Without."



There is great power in the term "fall," which on surface simply refers to the natural process of slowly letting go and turning inward. Yet, the term fall may also have a subtle less desirable connotation for some. This is because the concept of falling evokes a sense of decline, collapsing down, or losing balance.

The sap of life does indeed begin moving downward in this season, which requires attention and adjustment if we are to maintain health and balance. Attuning to the rhythms of nature and going with the flow of least resistance, we can sustain good health and create a positive sense of well-being as we adapt to seasonal change.

As the days grow shorter and the nights longer in the autumn season, the air becomes cooler and drier. During this season, all of nature is beginning to contract and move inward. We may also begin to feel a decline in our energy levels. This is an important time for us to rest, rejuvenate, shed our sorrows, and feel our yearnings.



Fall directly connects with the element of metal, which rules this season according to the five-element theory of traditional Chinese medicine. The metal element relates to the lungs and the colon in the body. We can benefit at this time from balancing our lung energy system in order to counter any emotions of grief and sadness while building the energy of courage and inner strength.

Fall is the season for letting go of whatever no longer serves us. As we do this, we become more open and receptive to new visions about what is meaningful and how we want to proceed in the future. Fall is also a time to focus on creating that which provides sustenance.

Just as migratory birds set off on their southbound journey, wild animals store food in preparation for their hibernation, and trees and plants drop their leaves and become dormant, we too can benefit by storing up what we need for the colder, darker months ahead. Self-nurturing practices are a big key!



Some suggestions for balancing the energies of metal in the autumn season include the following:

- 1. Make sure to hydrate and nourish yourself well to support your lungs which are vulnerable at this time.*
- 2. Be aware that most seasonal allergies that arise in the fall are related to a toxic colon. It may be an important time for a gentle colon cleanse.*
- 3. Visit your acupuncturist for a tune-up.*
- 4. Take long walks or hikes in nature in order to stimulate the breath and open the heart. The crisp and invigorating autumn air is so conducive to breathing out the old and breathing in the new!*
- 5. Do pranayama or other conscious breath practices.*
- 6. Eat spicy foods if they agree with you.*
- 7. Drink wholesome warming teas like Breathe Easy, Tulsi, Ginger, Chai, and so on.*
- 8. Clear clutter in your living environment, your car, and workspace.*
- 9. Examine your attitudes and clear up any hurtful and negative issues, including grudges from the past, resentments, self-deprecation, guilt, envy, and so on. Fall is a wonderful time for letting go rituals too, like writing down your feelings, thoughts, and intentions around letting go, and then burning them.*

According to the Science of Life known as Ayurveda, the vata season commences in mid-to-late September and lasts through the first half of winter season. This means that the vata dosha predominates in this season. Vata is the bodily humor (energy) composed of the air and ether elements. The air element predominates in the beginning part of the vata season, followed by the profoundly peaceful spiritual season of the ether element which sets in after the leaves fall and the earth becomes barren.

The qualities of the vata dosha are cold, dry, rough, light, changeable, irregular, and moving. Because vata is associated with the nervous system, its state is often reflected in our mental health. We can become restless, anxious, and ungrounded in the vata season if we aren't mindful. Our joints can become painful, or we can experience constipation, if this is warranted by our own constitutional nature. During autumn, it can be very helpful to build regular routines that calm the potentially chaotic vata energy. If you are doing yoga or a martial art, focus on calming, grounding, balancing, and heart opening practices. Vata season is also supported by gaining strength and building mass, so some of us may want to hit the gym.



As I sat down to write this article, my friend and colleague Wahneta Trotter of Satmya Ayurveda kindly offered some insight and advice for the fall season. Her knowledge is based on decades of deep study along with a dedicated personal and professional practice in Ayurveda:

Ayurveda teaches that we are made of the five elements of nature: ether, air, fire, water, and earth. Each element has specific qualities, a corresponding season, and even a special time of day during which it ebbs and flows. Summer is the season of the fire element. As summer ebbs, it gives way to the elements of ether and air. The air element cools down and becomes mobile, i.e., windy. It is extremely dry. Look at the trees recoiling and letting go of their leaves in this season. Watch the leaves dispersed through wind. This is vata flowing.

As the relentless and drying heat of summer gives way to a cooler and drying type of weather, our bodies are also drying out, similar to the trees. During vata season, it is therefore very important to slow down, eat cooked foods, and lubricate your body.



We actually do the opposite of what the cosmic forces are up to in order to maintain balance in the body and mind. As the winds rage, slow down, and avoid becoming windy. As you dry out, engage warm oiling practices of self-massage to stay rejuvenated. As you cool down, cook your food with yummy spices, and by all means, leave the raw foods and juices behind until late spring. Try it! You'll see that seasonal balancing according to Ayurveda can be very simple and effective. (If you'd like to reach out to Wahneta Trotter for her Ayurvedic services, you can reach her through her website at <https://www.satmyaayurveda.com/>.)

The autumn season has long been celebrated as an annual revival by many of the world's spiritual traditions. As the natural world begins to let go and draw within, we also benefit from inner reflection and healing in order to restore a sense of deeper stability to our lives. As an example, the Shardiya Maha Navaratri (Nine Nights of Divine Mother) will be observed around the world from September 26 to October 4, 2022. During these nine nights and ten days, nine forms of Devi Durga are worshipped.



Maha Navaratri provides an opportunity to give thanks and receive the blessings of Divine Mother. It is said that she comes down and walks among her devotees during this period, and the entire planet is bathed in a glorious glow of divine nurturing energy that can purify and uplift us in extraordinary ways. Healing light is magnified so that we can rise above weaknesses and manifest a higher potential.

This year, Maha Navaratri coincides with the Jewish high holy days, from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, ten days later. This year they begin on September 25 and end on October 5.



Fall is the season of harvest heralding nature's fertile bounty. It's an important time to rest and take stock, enjoy the fruits of your efforts during the past spring and summer, and examine and readjust anything that may be out of balance. May you enjoy this beautiful season, be grateful for your

attainments and all the important lessons learned, and make sure to offer the seeds of your achievements toward your dreams for the future.



*May you know that absence is alive with hidden presence,
that nothing is ever lost or forgotten.
May the absences in your life grow full of eternal echo.
May you sense around you the secret Elsewhere,
where the presences that have left you dwell.
May you be generous in your embrace of loss.
May the sore well of grief turn into a seamless flow of presence.
May your compassion reach out to the ones we never hear from.
May you have the courage to speak for the excluded ones.
May you become the gracious and passionate subject of your own life.
May you not disrespect your mystery through brittle words or false
belonging.
May you be embraced by God in whom dawn and twilight are one.
May your longing inhabit it's dreams within the Great Belonging.*

*From **To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings** by John
O'Donohue*