



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 077 – Welcoming Seasonal Change
October 3, 2021

00:05

Welcome to the Athena Wellness podcast, the show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

00:30

Hello and welcome to Episode 77. Thanks so much for joining me.

I'm recording this mid-September, sitting here comfy as can be. I'm wearing shorts, a T-shirt and flip flops. I'm feeling good as I chat with you. But I am lamenting the impending end of summer in the Northern Hemisphere. I love the warm weather. And I always feel a little wistful when the mornings turn darker and cooler each day as they have recently. But such is the cycle of life.

Athena Wellness kept me busy this summer. But I had some fun too, visiting with family and friends and taking road trips in my camper van. For me, there's a joy in heading out to explore and sleeping in the back of the truck under the stars. I missed that so much when the cold weather arrives. But there's a beauty to that impermanence and a welcoming to whatever the next season will bring.



Here's the interesting thing I'm finding: the deeper I go to connect with the energy of the current season each day, the easier and more enjoyable the seasonal transition becomes. And that's what we'll be exploring today.

We'll cover:

- The two main energetic shifts of the year of spring and autumn;
- What the autumn seasonal shift can bring; and
- Practices to work with this energy.

02:07

No matter where you are in the world, when you're listening to this or what season you're in, you can apply these concepts to your current circumstance. So sit back, take a nice long breath to ground yourself in presence, and let's get started.

As we all know, there are four seasonal changes during the calendar year: the vernal equinox, which is the beginning of spring, summer solstice, the autumnal equinox and winter solstice. Here's a quick reminder of what equinoxes and solstices are, thanks to britannica.com.

An equinox occurs when the position of the sun is exactly over the equator. When this happens, the hours of daylight and the hours of darkness are about equal most everywhere on Earth. Equinoxes take place twice a year in spring and autumn. And the word *equinox* comes from the Latin meaning "equal night."

03:15

A solstice is a moment in the year when the sun's path is as far north or south from the Earth's equator. When the sun's position is at the highest or lowest point in the sky, it gives



the appearance of standing still. The word *solstice* comes from the Latin words *sol*, meaning "sun," and *sistere*, meaning "to stand still."

So solstices mark the shortest day of the year, the beginning of winter, and the longest day of the year, the start of summer. But the real seasonal shifts for me happen in the spring and autumn when I feel the energetic transition to a new phase in life, a move toward outward activity and growth in the spring and then a shift inward toward less activity and release in the fall.

And you can feel those shifts, can't you? Think of the energy of spring and summer. It's like a wave that slowly builds, starting with the anticipation we feel as winter begins to ease. We begin to make plans for those long summer days that are on the horizon.

As nature starts to wake, so do we, feeling more playful and energetic. Spring rains remind us of the importance of our own spring cleaning. There's a sense of expansion, of doing, of gathering with friends outside, getting stuff done and cutting loose a bit. It's a cycle of blooming.

The momentum grows at summer solstice with peak energy and intensifying heat. The focus is on having fun, being active and enjoying carefree summer days. It's a cycle of growth.

We can begin to sense the shift into autumn about a month before the equinox. The apex of activity gives way to more balance and calm. We can sense the summer winding down in spite of the warmer weather. Perhaps we crave rest and start to slow a bit. We also begin to get ready for more of a routine at school or work.



The inward focus intensifies as the days grow shorter and colder. We begin to prepare for the months ahead by gathering, harvesting and storing. In the fullness of winter, with holiday celebrations in our wake, life slows even more and can seem bare and fallow, even as we know spring is on the horizon.

06:05

Isn't it interesting that when things change in nature, they resonate so deeply within us. Let's talk a bit about autumn, in particular, and what that seasonal shift can bring.

In the natural world, as we said, the days are getting shorter, the air cooler, the leaves are beginning to turn and will fall, and crops are being harvested. So how do we ground ourselves in what the season offers? What is it that we can learn from these natural cycles?

Spiritually, we tend to turn inward. While there's time for harvest and celebration, there's more time to rest and reflect. Going a little deeper, it can be a time for acknowledging growth and accomplishments, reviewing all that was experienced during the year. And it can be a time for grieving and honoring what was lost or what wasn't done.

But letting go can be the hard part, which is where natural reminders become helpful. What would happen if the trees didn't shed their leaves, if the fields weren't left fallow, and if animals didn't hibernate? Letting go is an act of renewal, of preparing for new growth that's to come.

The autumn season also brings ample opportunity for gratitude and celebration for the bounty in our lives. Just like the radiance of fall colors, we can appreciate all we've experienced with those we love. And then as the height of autumn activity evolves into



dormancy, we can embrace the empty space and spend time listening and allowing the emergence of a greater vision and making way for our own rebirth. Autumn is a wonderful time to reassess and reprioritize, a time to trust what you need to release, to rebalance inner lightness and darkness, and to prepare for what's ahead.

08:15

So let's get practical. **What practices can help us harness, balance and align with the energy of the autumn season?** Let's start with our physical selves and our surroundings, starting in the body.

Body

Movement: If there's one takeaway for the seasonal shifts of autumn or spring, it's walking in the fresh air. You already know all of the health benefits of the physical activity of walking. What I'm referring to is connecting with your surroundings, of using your senses to ground yourself, the sight of the fall colors, the sound of the leaves crunching, the scent of soil and firepits, the taste of pumpkin and ginger and chai, and the feeling of wearing a warm sweater.

Next is **nourishment**. Autumn is all about the harvest and a wonderful time to eat seasonally, think soups and stews and chilis. Produce that's in season includes squash, figs, blackberries, grapes, plums, oranges and chestnuts, just to name a few. And I'll put a link in the show notes to a great resource that can help you determine what's in season in your area. It's at seasonalfoodguide.org.

And the last under body is **self-care**. This is a great time to determine if any wellness routine adjustments are needed to accommodate the change in temperature and sunlight. Will you change the location of your workouts from outdoors to indoors? Will you



exercise later in the day? How about sleep? After the spring growth and summer activity, our bodies need to integrate our experiences through deep rest. Are changes needed to better align with the shorter days and longer nights?

This can also be a good time to think about how to prepare your immune system for the winter months. I usually do some fasting around the equinoxes to rebalance myself and then determine my wellness protocols for the upcoming season.

Next is your **physical space**. The first part of this is the hearth or your home. And in keeping with the season, two things come to mind. First is **harvesting**, meaning gathering, stocking up on dry goods, preserving food, chopping and stacking wood, collecting kindling, winterizing anything that will be exposed to the elements. The second is **releasing**, taking a cue from the leaves. What can be cleaned, purged or decluttered? Perhaps changing out summer or winter clothes depending on where you live, or whatever needs to be done to prepare your household and settle in for the colder months.

The word that comes to mind is **sanctuary**. How can you make a little corner of your world a place to nest and nourish yourself? What creates an inspirational vibe for you to slow down, settle in and go deep? I love low light in the colder months. dimming the electric lights, amber candle light, and sometimes the glow from the fireplace. This is where we can begin to assimilate the past year. And this is where the seeds for the new year begin to take shape.

12:05

Mind

The next category is mind and I have this broken down into **reflecting** and **exploring**. First **reflecting**: autumn is a great time to refresh routines and begin to plan for the new year



that still may be months away. This is “blue sky” thinking of what your life can be – from the work that you could do, the relationships you could have, and personal development that you could explore. It could be places to visit, things you might want to create, ways of being, and so on.

If you could rethink your life design, what would it look like? You can hold that question and meditate on it, journal about it, or have a conversation with a trusted loved one.

12:54

Explore. When entering the colder months, here's a favorite question: What do I want to learn? What will engage me throughout the winter months? Last October, the answer to that question was learning podcasting. And that kept me quite busy through the springtime. Do you feel any curious or creative nudges you'd like to explore this year?

Spirit

Last is spirit, and I have that broken down into **quiet** and **pause**.

First **quiet**. For many of us who thrive on activity, this is where things can get a little scary, right? You've probably been with me to this point as we reviewed what we can do for our body, our home, our mental well-being. But being in the quiet? Some of us can't find the quiet and others might be terrified to enter it, and that's fine.

My suggestion here is to create that cozy sanctuary spot and just enjoy it. Perhaps it's an early morning cup of coffee, or reading a few pages of an inspirational book, or listening to a podcast after everyone else has gone to bed. This is definitely quality over quantity. A few mindful moments to get grounded, a few breaths to get present, and then



just feel some sense of spaciousness and connection with your inner wisdom. A few quiet moments to check in and see if there's any gentle adjustments that you can make.

Pause. Whenever you're ready to go beyond a few quiet moments each day, you can begin to think about how you might press pause on commitments and obligations that aren't aligning with how you're feeling. What can you do to minimize your energy expenditure, especially around the holidays?

So those are my suggestions for working with autumn energy. But speaking of the holidays, I know we have listeners from all around the world. And I don't know how the holiday season is for you. But I do know that autumn is a great time to set your intention on how you choose to spend the holidays this year. It gives you time to get quiet and pause, just like we talked about. And to get a sense of what would feel good this year, so you can begin to set expectations with your loved ones.

Over the years, my holidays have shifted a lot. The gifts I buy are for a handful of little ones. I no longer send holiday cards and I've stopped making a lot of traditional dishes since my grandmother and my mom passed. Time is spent with loved ones in smaller groups, brought about by the pandemic, and that is made for quality visits.

But all of this was not done by one declaration. It evolved over a number of years, starting with the adults eliminating gifts for each other. And because holidays impact family and friends, years ago my partner and I started with what we could control. We hosted or attended holiday gatherings as we always did, but blocked out time afterwards, using our vacation time to create little mini-retreats after Thanksgiving and Christmas.



What I found is that when I took the time, however brief, to mindfully navigate the holiday season, I always came into January ready to embrace the new year. And that's a great feeling.

Whatever choices you make, I hope you find this season meaningful, filled with a bountiful harvest, enriching celebrations and deep connections.

I'd like to leave you with a quote from poet Stanley Horowitz. He said, "Winter is an etching, spring a watercolor, summer an oil painting and autumn a mosaic of them all."

17:23

Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time. Thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.

If you know anyone who could benefit from today's episode, please pass it on. And many thanks for supporting the show by subscribing and leaving a review. It means a lot and it helps others find their way to our circle.

If you'd like to access the show notes, have a question you'd like addressed on a future episode, or would like a transcript of this episode, visit www.AthenaWellness.com/podcast. Until next time, be well!