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SPIRIT, MIND & BODY

Join with Nature in Seasonal Transformation

That time of year is upon us when nature is full of noticeable change. It's robust and abundant, as the reds and oranges of autumn burst forth against a bright blue sky. The sun is low, casting streams of light where there once were none, making wonderful shadows from the most ordinary household things. The days grow shorter as nature offers up her last hurrah, showering us with all her brilliance and exerting her final force before closing down for her long winter's nap.

How many of us have not taken notice of this change? Which of us has not stepped out of our homes, offices, and busy lives over the past few weeks proclaiming, "Wow! What a beautiful day!" How can we help but notice the living art that surrounds us -- the painting that is taking shape before our very eyes? For me, a day doesn't go by when I am not awestruck by my surroundings. Whether it is in Petaluma, Pt. Reyes, San Francisco or anywhere in between, I am forever aware that I am in a very special place.

California is not extreme in its seasons but we do have them. Our summers can be

hot and our winters wet. Our trees lose their leaves in the fall, and every year, like clockwork, nature fulfills her promise to awaken our senses to the beauty of spring. Filling our hearts with joy, she enriches our lives with newness, color and vitality.

We are a part of nature and we have our seasons too. Our energies and habits and moods ebb and flow like the tides. We grow hungrier in the fall and find we need a little more sleep. Winter is our time to stay close to hearth and home and warm ourselves by the fires -- a time to reflect, renew, become reacquainted with ourselves and with those we love. We know spring is just around the corner and we can look forward to a long and active summer. But for now, isn't it just nice to unwind? To slow down? To stop? To hunker down in the depths of our being and pay homage to the spirit that lives there?

Yes, we have our seasons too, but sometimes we forget how to honor them. We choose to ignore our internal time clock and lose some of the mystery of being alive. We trade our seasonal rites for more activity, more productivity, more acquisitions,

more obligations, more debt, more pressure, more stress, more illness. "More" is not necessarily better, especially if we let the need for more run our lives. In that case, more is actually less -- less spontaneity, less time to be with the people we love, less time to do what makes us happy, less time to hear our spirit's song, less time to eat well, sleep well and love well. It means less time to run, to jump, to laugh, to dance and to sing.

Contrary to popular belief, "less" may really be more. Less may be your freedom. Less may be everything you have ever wanted but didn't know you could have. Living with less is not a radical act. It may actually be your true nature. And your true nature may be begging you to come home. Ask some people in hospice what they wish they had done differently. I promise you that working, worrying, and acquiring more goods will not make their top ten list.

You can choose to live differently each and every day.

You can notice and honor the seasons inside yourself and act on the natural rhythm that lives there. You can close your eyes and imitate the wind so that the mystery of life will flow through you rather than around you.

"A fish cannot drown in water. A bird does not fall in air. Each creature ... must live in its own true nature."

...Mechtild of Magdebury

BALLARD STREET by Jerry Van Amerongen



Charles starts his day with an act of rebellion.

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