

Excerpts from “Lead Us To A Place ~ your spiritual journey through life’s seasons, by Andrew Pacholyk MS, L.Ac

Throughout this book, you will find me making references to the rhythms of time from different cultures. I often connect the passage or transition through the seasons by relating them to music, color, stones, aroma and much more. I consider the references from other countries and their cultural, spiritual and historical traditions to be amazing teaching tools of self-discovery. I have dropped some “gemstones” along the way for you to follow. These are little “pearls” I have created to help myself to understand a subject a little better. I hope you find them useful. I will relate life marker to our senses, as well as our physical and metaphysical processes for the purpose of looking a little deeper into “who WE are” and how we can access more of our own innate wisdom. I hope you enjoy this journey.

In this book, I make many references to energy. The energy around us and the energy within us. We are all vibrating, energetic beings that are constantly regulating - constantly fluctuating. This never stops, even after death. I also believe we still “resonate” energy after death, in the form of spirit.

This book does not preach religious dogma nor a one-sided view of faith. Rather, this book is a “window” to all faiths, religions and ancient beliefs that lead us to the same place... our spirituality. It is up to you to decide what you feel, speaks to you and gives you a chance to formulate your own belief system.

What Is Our Spiritual Quest?

Throughout my career as a health and wellness practitioner, patients would often ask me this question. What is my spiritual path? The question has many layers and is hard to sum up in a paragraph. The topic has been debated for centuries by scholars and clergymen. What I have come to realize, is that our spiritual journey is a culmination of little experiences we gather along the way. These are experiences or lessons we learn. They are like bricks in a wall or threads in a quilt we bring together to construct or weave a better understanding of God....

What brings us closer to our spiritual selves? I believe that **finding spirituality, actually starts from within us.** I have seen countless people who go to church, synagogue or temple, yet do not seem to take away from this experience, a spiritual understanding, let alone apply it to their daily lives.

By choosing to look at ourselves a little deeper, it may explain WHY we are not finding what we are looking for elsewhere or why we may be unhappy. We often seek answers elsewhere, first, before checking in with ourselves. Self-awareness, self-love and self-examination give us clues as to what we seek, what we need and how we can actually go about discovering this, if we pay more attention.

Spirituality can be found anywhere. You can experience it in a church or temple, in the beauty of nature, in a yoga, dance or exercise class, or in the darkest, most unlikely places. Spirituality is a state of mind. It is an experience that brings you closer to the realization of life's truths. It can be found when facing fear, enjoying simplicities or contemplation from within....

Spirituality comes when you are ready to look at it. In truth, our connection to spirit comes by way of looking inward. Yet subtle clues can come from external sources that intrigue us or connect to our emotions.

Nature holds the secrets to so many lessons in spirituality. Not only does our connection to spirit express itself through nature, it is the fundamental building blocks of life's answers. The elements are a perfect example of how they mimic our emotions. For example, a balanced fire element can cook our food or an angry fire can scorch thousands of acres. Calm water can nourish our bodies or rushing water can carve paths out of stone. Air together with water can create a terrible hurricane, while heat can warm the earth in order to grow rich in harvest. We see the same behavior within us. Balancing them, allows us to better comprehend ourselves. This opens a greater door to trust and seeing the bigger picture around us.... that which we cannot control, see or understand. This is spirituality.

The seasons grow in curiosity and peak in full fruition, as they then sustain and finally transition into the next interval. This too, mirrors our spiritual journey. This series of cyclical advancements culminate into a process, like stepping through another door.

Being spiritual is knowing ourselves. It is our beliefs that bring us closer to a spiritual life. It is trust that allows us to put our "faith" in a power greater than our own. It is our quest to understand our purpose in this life and what may be the meaning behind it. I was once told that we all have a purpose in life and it is part of our spiritual journey to uncover it.

Finding spirituality starts from the exact point you are **RIGHT NOW**. We must learn to cultivate our spirit. To be considered in good health, we can learn to quiet the mind and find harmony within the body. Only then, can we achieve harmony with the world and nature around us.

Spring

Spring represents birth, renewal and rebirth. Spring is our life's beginning or introduction to life. Within our life cycle, Spring is associated with our first quadrant of development from birth through our 20's.

Our teens and 20's is our time of self-discovery. It is the vibrant, raw energy of an uncut diamond or impulsive expression of a wire of electricity that has been cut and is flailing in the air. In our teens and 20's we have an open sense of willingness to explore, an immature sense of boundaries and a raw sense of intuition. We often fly with abandon, run without care and do it now, pay for it later.

The season of Spring is much like this. It has been celebrated over the centuries as the beginning of the rebirth period. This season is one of the most embraced and most significant of the season changes, for it denotes the start of new life, regeneration of nature, creativity and the renewal of the spirit.

Gemstone:
The Promise of New Beginnings

~ “At last the season, Spring awakes,
to honor all from Winter’s break.
To offer up more green, more light,
with equal parts of day and night...
You offer us a brand-new turn,
and find new ways that we can learn,
about the promise that you've made,
to make anew each day, each day.
Again, I'm grateful for this time,
when life begins to sing and shine.
away from winter's frigid touch,
and grant us all more love and such!”

~ Andrew Pacholyk MS. L.Ac

Creativity

Living is an act of creativity. Not just being an artist, writer, painter but the sheer act of living is a creative force that we often do not acknowledge.

Living consciously and with awareness is an act of even deeper creativity. On many levels, creativity is an inner process. What you dream, imagine, and then give physical form to, is the transition from inner insight to an outer process.

This is what you create. Making a dream or an idea a reality. Creativity is often used to refer to the process of creating new ideas, actions or approaches. Innovation is the process of both generating and applying such creative ideas in some specific context.

Although it may seem that creativity can sometimes come out of nowhere, in truth, it comes from a deep well of self-acquired knowledge, both conscious and unconscious.

Gemstone:
Creative Spark

“Stimulate my heart and mind, So I can bring forth work divine.
I spin, and write and draw and paint, Divine flow through as I create,
My masterpiece for all to see,
And share with those who are in need.”

~Andrew Pacholyk, MS L.Ac

Building Blocks of Creativity

Creativity comes from combining our knowledge in new ways. That is why the creative process (although primarily a right brain/frontal lobe function) also emerges from our own unique knowledge and how we weave it together!

1. Often, in any situation, we must take quiet time to be with ourselves in order to observe and define an idea. What is it I want to create? Get specific. Define your goal. Write it down. Give it parameters. Start with one image, idea, or objective. What am I going to do to get from point A to point B? Allow the answers to come to you in your quiet time.

2. Carry a notebook or use an app on your phone. Have it with you to jot down a thought or phrase that comes to mind. Creativity can happen at any time. So, when the moment strikes, you have the opportunity to record the thought or creative genius.

3. Brainstorming: is a great technique used in generating creative ideas. Very effective when done with others, it's a stimulating way to get fresh ideas from different minds. Start by suggesting a topic or goal. "What healing product is needed in our spa?" "Which technique should we market for the holidays?" This is the foundation from which you and your group can start building ideas. With one suggestion, start building on top of that.

4. Association with Words: These are words or statements that can be said or written in order to stimulate the mind into digging deeper into our well of knowledge. Associating words in a brainstorm session, can open up a whole new path. This method takes a list of words and then builds an association between other key words on the list. Once an original word has been chosen, the next person will find a word they associate with it. The next person must then do the same with the previous word. Word association can be done on your own, as well. Open a book or dictionary and randomly choose a word. Then begin formulating associated words or ideas using this key word. You'll be amazed how well this works.

5. Thought Journaling: As you have probably experienced in the past, sometimes the harder you try to be creative, the least creative you are. Perhaps, not trying too hard is one way to tap into the subconscious. I find that journaling thoughts can be an insightful approach to listening to what your fore brain has to say.

Try suggesting a topic to yourself before bed. This is one way to "sleep on it". In the morning, recall your dreams. Even if they are images or colors or words.... jot them down first thing in the morning upon waking. Then go back to it later. See if something comes of it.

6. Wander: Take a trip. Walk around the block, through your neighborhood or through a park. Head to the sea, the hills or a mountain trail. There is a concept (and herbal formula) in Chinese medicine referred to as the *Free and Easy Wanderer*. Walking or simply wandering often allows us to clear our head and free our minds. This allows for the free flow of movement, creativity, and vital energy or Qi. It is extremely therapeutic.

7. Incorporate Mind Games: Some of the best ways to engage your brain is by using your memory functions! Individuals who are always learning something new about the world, or maintaining a playful spirit, will find creativity to flow easier than those who do not. Challenge your mind and memory function. By exercising your brain, it provides inspiration and fills your mind with information that allows you to make creative connections easily.

8. Avoid Doing Drugs: Drugs cloud your mind, impair judgement and diffuses motor function. People on drugs think they are creative. To everyone else, they seem like people on drugs.

9. Educate Yourself: Learn as much as you can about everything possible. Fill your brain with inspiration, excitement and passions that interest you. Understand how to incorporate the information you learn into your own creative spin.

10. Take Everything One Day at A Time: Sometimes situations can become overwhelming when looking at the big picture. Again, take your quiet time to observe the moment. Do some soul searching. Allow yourself to take all the time and space that you need to grasp your creative genius. Trust the Universe. It is within you!

“Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties.” – Erich Fromm

The Morning: Sun Salutation Music

You can certainly call me a sun worshiper. Being born on the Summer Solstice, I have always been attracted to the warmth, power and glow of the sun! Sun worshiping or sun salutation as we referred to it in yoga, is the greeting of the day as you embrace the power of all things, rising before you! Sun salutation is a series of poses or asanas done to not only wake up the body but to encourage the soul! This music is inspired by my love for any morning, the summer solstice and the beauty of the sunrise. I hope you add these songs to the playlist of your life! I call this list,

The Sun Salutation Playlist!

1. Morning Mood, “Peer Gynt” Suite No.1, Op.46, Grieg
2. Aquarius/Let The Sunshine In, Hair
3. Sun Salutation, David Moore
4. Seasons In The Sun, Studio 99
5. The Warmth Of The Sun, The Beach Boys
6. House Of The Rising Sun, The Animals
7. Walking On Sunshine, Katrina and the Waves
8. Sunshine, Jonathon Edwards
9. Sunshine On My Shoulders, John Denver
10. Halo / Walking On Sunshine, Glee Cast
11. You Brought The Sunshine, The Clark Sisters
12. You Are The Sunshine Of My Life, Stevie Wonder
13. Morning Has Broken, Cat Stevens
14. A Beautiful Morning, The Rascals
15. Sunrise Serenade, Glenn Miller
16. Blissful Soothing Soundscapes (Sun Salutation) Spiritual Journeys
17. Indian Sunrise, Classical Indian Music
18. Moon Salutation – Chandra Namaskara, Winter Hill Records
19. The Red Pony Suite I: Morning on the Ranch, Aaron Copland
20. 98.6, Keith
21. Haydn: String Quartet in B flat, Op.76 No.4 – “Sunrise” , Haydn

22. Certain of the Dawn: Hymn to the Eternal Flame, Barry Abelson
 23. Seasons In The Sun, Studio 99
 24. Appalachian Spring: Doppio movimento, Aaron Copland
 25. Symphony No. 6 (Pastoral) , Beethoven
- ~ Honorable Mention: (great for sun salutation): Sabrina: Theme, John Williams

Solar Meditation with Crystals

The sun has been prayed to, worshiped and adored for thousands of years. It is the center of our lives on earth and we would not exist without it! What better way to start your day by offering your intention outward to the Universe or with the last rays of the setting sun in the evening to give thanks.

Using a crystal as a meditation tool is a practice I have done for over 30 years. Introduced to me by my yoga teacher, Deva Inglesia Germana and reinforced over the years by several other, dear mentors, including Jean-Claude Van Itallie and Zachary Selig, it is a wonderful way to empower your intentions. Consider using one or all of these stones:

Sunstone: This stone is a kiss of sunshine, crystallized. Honors the God within, brings good luck and fortune. Energizes and empowers one's self. Warms the heart and lifts/rejuvenates the spirit. Sunstone is used for protection, life force, and grounding. Sunstone is a great stone to use with "energy vampires", or those who drain your energy from you. This includes parents, children, lovers, patients, bosses or anyone who is possessive, aggressive or overbearing. Sunstone breaks these bonds and allows light, separation, and clarity from these energies. This stone clears and brightens both the entire Chakra and clears the Aura. Sunstone does great justice when placed on our power center or Solar Plexus Chakra. Sunstone is a great stone to relieve stress and overcome fear.

Citrine: Citrine energizes every level of the aura, cleansing and balancing the subtle bodies as it aligns it with the physical body. Citrine crystals are invigorating and positive and help steer us in a positive direction. They are used for mental and emotional clarity. Considered the "merchant stone", citrine is very versatile and is used for mental and emotional clarity, problem solving, memory issues, will power, optimism, confidence and self-discipline. It reduces anxiety, fear and depression. An energizing crystal, citrine absorbs, transmutes, grounds and dissolves negative energy, which makes it a very protective stone. Citrine crystals are invigorating and positive.

Yellow Calcite: Also called Golden Calcite, is a stone that boosts overall energy levels in a peaceful, gentle manner. Yellow calcite increases strength and health. It stimulates the intellect. It can help organize intellectual thoughts and information and is used by people who meditate because the color is linked to the Solar Plexus Chakra, sun and light. It is also an important stone for astral projection. It has been used for centuries as folk remedies as a detoxifier. In the bath, Egyptians used it for decalcifying joints. Use this stone to boost life energy and to encourage will power.

Tiger's Eye: The stone for bringing more luck into your life, Tiger's Eye is the most recognized for attracting money, psychic protection, courage, confidence, willpower. Used for clear thinking and speaking to show us the personal power in life that we have. Very versatile for the Solar Plexus Chakra, Third Eye Chakra and Crown Chakra.

Working with These Stones

These unique stones are full of sun and a bright spot in anyone's day. You can lay on the floor with one stone at your solar plexus or two inches below! These power centers embrace your own radiance and light. They are encouraging and empowering centers and help bring a sense of awareness through knowing ourselves and sparking our intuition.

You can sit in a comfortable position on the floor, ground or in a chair. Face the sun, in order to feel the warmth (and promise) on your face. Hold one or more of these stones in your dominant hand with the other hand underneath it. If you are using two stones, hold one in each hand. If you are using 3-4, place them in a circle around you.

Create a meditation circle on the floor, in your meditation space or on your yoga mat. Anoint each crystal with a "sunny essential oil" such as orange, lemon, neroli or sunflower oil. Invoke each direction by creating a circle with the 4 stones. Invoke the 4 elements by placing crystals in a circle in each direction, starting from the east, south, west and moving in a clockwise direction ending with the north.

Close your eyes and breathe in deep, exhaling as if you were breathing life into your stone(s). This sense of regeneration, stimulates yourself and your crystal. The exchange of energy you take from the stone, engages your core! It is like a battery jolting back and forth between your body's energy and the living presence of the crystal. Take as much as you need and recharge.

Whether it is the morning sun, full of promise or the setting sun, with grace and thanks... give your attention to it. Feel its power and energy. It is the second most powerful force we can sense in the Universe.

With each deep breath, bring the power of your intention to your Solar Plexus Chakra. This power center is our greatest force of movement and motivation. It is from here that we energize our will power. Breathe into this energy center. Sense your connection between the crystals around you and the center just below your heart.

Expand and contract as you inhale and exhale. Take in the sun's rays and exhale out the unpleasant thoughts. Release, as the sun releases. Expand as the sun expands. Take as much time as you need to recharge.

When you are ready to finish your meditation, simply (and slowly) bring your focus back to behind your eyelids. Sense your surroundings as they come back to you and slowly open your eyes.

I always recommend journaling about your experience. Include any references that may have come up so you can look at them later.

Sun Walk

My dear friend, Jean Claude has a farm and theatre company called Shantigar, in the rolling hills of Massachusetts. He often takes morning constitutions over the sprawling landscape on a "sun walk". This morning ritual allows you to take the sun on your skin and face. It enables the sun's rays to trigger the synthesis of Vitamin D and can be a very spiritual process, as you commune with nature.

With one or several chosen stones in his hand, he will slowly walk, taking in all that is before him. He slowly turns the stone(s) in his hand or rubs their smooth surface with his thumb and forefinger, while either reciting a mantra, saying a prayer or just focusing on his daily intention of clearing a path in the woods.

Strength

Strength has many definitions. When we think of strength or being strong, it could refer to your own physicality or muscle strength. Are you emotionally strong? How strong are you spiritually/mentally?

Here, you can discover the secrets to having physical strength. Understand the power behind your emotional strength and lastly, you can use these tips to build and maintain your mental strength. I have learned that these **three strengths are interlinked** and by becoming more mentally strong, our emotional and physical strength follows. It will also lend itself to our spiritual path and beliefs.

Gemstone: Strength

*“O four directions ~ I do call,
To assist and build foundation strong
I am the one with strength and power,
Built upon this mental tower.
So bring about my inner sense,
Of self-awareness, this point hence.”*

~ Andrew Pachoyk, MS, L.Ac

Tips for Building Strength

What makes us strong? You need to find the right balance that works for you. Strength is about relinquishing weakness, gaining courage and releasing limitations. We will find strength when we truly believe in ourselves. The more strength you find in yourself, the more you will believe is possible. When our mental capacity feels we can do something, it is our body and spirit that easily follows.

1. Courage: is extending yourself beyond your own limitations. Courage is defined as the risk of losing something for the benefit of something else. Courage is the idea of standing up for what you believe in. Courage comes when we start to reassure ourselves. Courage manifests from a desire to want to do better, take care of ourselves and honor who we are. This is strength.

2. The Belief in Yourself: We will find strength when we truly understand ourselves. The more you understand who you are, the stronger your foundation becomes. When our foundation is built, we are more able to stand up for our beliefs. We trust our judgments and believe we can surmount the challenges.

3. Let Things Go: Learn to let things go once in a while. Learn to recognize the things that do not have great impact in your life and release them. Let go of the thing you cannot control.

4. Confidence Empowers Strength: Allow confidence in your life and you will let in strength. Be sure of yourself, without doubting or second guessing your decisions. This is the road to confidence. Confidence gives you power. The benefit to this, is that it makes you a more assured person! Have the guts to not care what others think and you will become empowered with confidence. This lends itself to great strength.

5. Celebrate All Your Success: This is the one place that is often the most out of balance. Our lives are filled with endless checks, balances and to-do lists. It is important to stop and take stock in the goals you have accomplished. Don't forget to celebrate your successes. They are important to recognize and celebrating them will build strength.

6. Explore Your Options: We can all feel overwhelmed with our work or family responsibilities. These emotions can undermine our strengths. Take control. Consider re-organizing your day. Delegate work. Focus on one task in front of you. Set priorities. Be satisfied with doing a few good things in a day instead of too many.

7. Trust: The more knowledgeable we become, the more we believe in ourselves. When we believe in ourselves, we are more likely to trust the outcomes that occur. This is strength.

8. Simplify: When we pile too many bricks on a foundation, we weaken the ground it stands on. Simplifying is not weakness. Simplifying is strength. It is learning to take on just the right number of tasks to gain the same outcome. We often overdo something, due to our own insecurity with it. When we simplify, we are clearing out the clutter, gaining confidence.

9. Strength Gained by Appreciating the Little Things: Really appreciate when something in your life comes into balance. Acknowledge it. Be grateful. This empowers and builds inner strength. Inner strength reflects in your actions. Your actions relay a sense of knowledge. This shows the world your obedience to the task and therefore, the strength in your convictions. Strength comes from appreciating something small.

10. You Are In Control Of Your Life: With every decision you make, you shape your own reality. Strength is simply a matter of knowing what you want and making good decisions. By deciding what you want, making a plan, and actively going for it, you can create the life of your dreams. When you come up against something you have no control over, you are then able to accept this with faith and trust that there as a "greater plan behind it".

The Realm of the Possible

In my approach to "Spirit Medicine", I use the power of my energy therapies I have studied with a look at a particular person's belief in themselves and their surrounding situation(s). As individual as the cells that make up our systems, the process of healing each individual is as unique as this. It is inevitable as human nature dictates, to want to categorize and organize things. This is an innate function of the brain system itself. If you have this... then you do this... and so on.

As we learn... a system of healing, be it allopathic medicine or complementary and alternative modalities such as massage therapy, Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese medicine, color therapy and so on...there tends to be a set of tried and true rules to observe, follow or be guided by.

As we practice... it is never as cut and dried! We would all like to see patients come in with classic textbook symptoms. This would make it so easy for us to treat. Unfortunately, those cases tend to be more the exception rather than the rule. This is what makes healing not only an art, but also a lifetime of discoveries. It is finally, a patient's belief in their healing that makes it so.

This brings me back to spirit and belief. You can believe that you will get better and not be considered spiritual, and you may heal. But, when you have faith in your healing process, it seems that much more possible.

I feel, nothing in healing, is etched in stone. What method of treatment may help one individual may not help the next. This is why it is important to be open to and aware of as many possibilities in the healing arena as possible. I also do not believe that if someone has said or has proven that a form of healing MAY NOT work in general, that this is grounds for abandoning the treatment. What may not work for one may absolutely be appropriate in healing another.

In Western medicine, for example, we tend to only work with and accept the most recent medications; the most recent findings and the most current approaches...disregarding the rest.

In Chinese medicine, no theory or form of healing is ever thrown out but placed in the “tool belt of knowledge” and can be called upon when one path is not as efficient.

In any clinical setting where there is an interview, there is an exchange of energies. Through these energies, the practitioner and patient can observe the ability to relate to one another via intuition, creative hunches, the give and take of power, nonverbal and emotional insights and nonverbal forms of communication, which form a valuable source of knowledge about each other’s personalities, and his or her transference.

In the clinical setting, the energies of transference and counter transference are always present. Trying to balance these energies that abound in a clinical interview are both challenging to recognize, as they are to cope with. The process of being aware, as well as being present, plays a major role in the recognition as to where an imbalance can manifest. As a practitioner, your “tool belt of knowledge” can be an imperative part of the process. As a patient, you can open yourself up to better understanding, trust and honoring the thoughts of the practitioner. These delicate energy levels, when balanced, can help both to maintain a level of strength and understanding.

Belief Becomes Substance

The belief in our recovery is probably the most important aspect of any treatment. When the patient and the practitioner are onboard, the healing process is brought up a notch. I see this time and time again, even with terminally ill patients. No matter what the dis-ease, as long as the patient retains the belief in their ability to sustain and maintain their level of health, it is their spirit, positivity, or energy of hope, that can keep them going, even through some of the darkest hours. One of the greatest remedies about expanding our hope is that beliefs that used to seem impossible can now be a part of our everyday life! I want people to understand these guidelines:

* Energy follows thought. Program thought to be positive and our energy will reflect it!

* Our Belief System is one of the major factors that can get us through situations or can cause our life to crumble around us! I do believe that there is a lot of innate goodness and balancing that our minds create, subconsciously, in order to get us through hard times. The other portion of this is how we “program” ourselves to deal with any given situation.

* We have a conscious choice. We can choose to be beaten or choose to win.

* Our self-confidence and self-love are often the key to opening and strengthening our health.

* Really appreciating what we DO have as opposed to what we would like to have sometimes makes a significant difference. This is always an important element in healing that is often neglected.

With this foundation built, practically any healing modality will have an even better chance of taking root in the positive and strengthening all that it offers in return.

There are many factors in the healing process and the practitioner is only part of the plan. The patient is the other piece of the puzzle. I had a wonderful teacher who once said to me:

“A doctor’s job is not to heal a patient, it is to show the patient who they really are!”

This profound statement has stayed with me. It has given me the insight to offer options of healing for others. Steering a patient in a particular direction can allow them to heal themselves. It is good practice to constantly seek the reinforcing remedy of spiritual healing.

"Healing may not be so much about getting better, as about letting go of everything that isn't you - all of the expectations, all of the beliefs - and becoming who you are." ~ Rachel Naomi Remen

Gemstone:
Buddha's Thoughts

*"He went through life a man of wealth, of
power, lot and privilege.*

*As time had passed, he found he could -
no longer live in riches.*

*So off he went, forsaking all to seek a
greater path,*

*a path of self-reflection, rediscovery and
wrath.*

*The wrath to turn life upside down and
change collective thought,*

*The way to liberation is by **middle way**,
he taught.*

*To remove the innate suffering and
repetitive rebirths,*

*of spirit due to karma and the mundane
path on earth*

*So follow now, the eightfold path, to find
nirvana's light,*

*A light of truth, resolve and bliss, your
path of great insight."*

~ Andrew Pacholyk MS L.Ac.

Fall Element: Earth

Earth is home planet. Yet earth doesn't necessarily always represent the physical earth, but that part of us, which is stable, solid and dependable. Earth is the realm of abundance, prosperity and wealth. Earth is a personality trait and Earth is an element, as well.

Earth represents traits of sensations, patience, stability, strength, health, grounding and centering of energies, promoting peace, fertility, money, business success, stability, warmth, comfort and physical labor.

The element, Earth is associated with the late summer season, early Fall and with dampness. The element is associated with the spleen (pancreas) and stomach, where we process all that we take in emotionally and physically. The Earth is the source and provider of all our needs.

Emotionally, this element is associated with nurturing and with our survival instincts, as well as to our sense of grounding and connection to our bodies and the physical plane. Ideally, "earth" connects us to our health, prosperity, security, and dynamic presence. It is associated with our Root Chakra.

The Earth Signs of the zodiac are Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn. Those who are "earthy" are considered disciplined. They think through their next move, are conventional and dependable. They are often responsible, methodical, and concerned with details. They can count on being grounded, savvy, practical and good at following regulations and procedures.

Earth signs conform to established standards. Earth signs follow protocol, seek standards and obey orders. They agree with the social norm and conduct their lives in this manner. They work on being polite, accepted and appreciated. Earth signs have a physical nature about them and are practical, prudent and conventional. The balanced Earth sign follows the innate rules of behavior. They make good business people, love buying, selling and trading and are very socially oriented.

Emotionally, when earth is imbalanced, it can either cause excess worry or pensiveness. The trait of "over thinking" is a spleen/stomach issue and can affect our entire being. Worry can consume the body and express itself as stagnation. This is the case for anyone, but especially "earth personalities".

Physically, when the earth element is imbalanced, feelings that affect the stomach are common. The "knot" in the stomach or "plum pit Qi" (a tightening of the throat), nausea, vomiting, pain, ulcers (that eat away) are all the result of this imbalance.

Earth interacting with the other elements, is an ancient Mayan, Chinese and Greek concept, which has been handed down through other cultures over time. In these ancient paradigms, especially the "5 element" concept of the Chinese and Ayurvedic theories, being "brought back down to earth" is earth's power over air. **Air** dries out earth and water turn earth to mud. Fire burns earth melting the metal.

The **earth** is composed of a wide variety of sand, soil, rocks and minerals, which provides vegetation and supports life. All the elements are associated with earth.

Water supports this vegetation to grow. Water is considered the universal solvent as it can dissolve more substances than any other liquid. Water flows and traveling through our body or through the ground taking nutrients, chemicals and minerals along with it. Water turns to steam from the heat of the sun, evaporating into the air. This creates the rain water, which fills the clouds, along with a variety of gases and returns back to earth in a never-ending cycle.

The composition of these gases make **air** and is just right for life on Earth. When we breathe the oxygen in the air, we then breathe out carbon dioxide. Plants need to manufacture their food through photosynthesis, with help from carbon dioxide. Plants in turn give off oxygen during photosynthesis.

Fire is closely linked to air. Fire exists because of oxygen, fuel, and heat. Fire provides warmth and comfort. The earth provides natural fuel, such as coal and wood for fire to burn.

Therefore, **all these cycles** are a result of the elements we experience on earth and cannot live without.

Top 10 Crystals for Winter

Winter is the time for being introspective and meditative. Winter is our time to rest and replenish. Because winter is a time of less light and colder conditions, it can also be a difficult time for many people. Crystals can play a part in brightening our nights, improving our outlook and encouraging us to look within, peacefully. Here are my top 10 choices for Winter.

Angelite: This stone is excellent at balancing, polarizing and aligning the physical body with the Aura or ethereal network. It is very calming and its shade of blue refreshes the eyes and spirit. This crystal helps us to be in touch with angels and animal guides, as well as assisting in distant communication with other humans. Most effective on the Throat Chakra, Angelite helps in self-expression, communication and allows us to speak our mind, helping us to become more assertive. Its soothing effects on the Throat Chakra works beautifully in calming and soothing anxiety or overactive children. Use this stone to call your Angels for guidance and support. Angelite is often used for psychic connection to oneness with the Universe, the angelic realm and for spiritual guidance.

Azurite: Referred to as the jewel of wisdom or Stone of Heaven, azurite symbolizes insight and discovery. It is said to increase psychic abilities. Azurite activates the Third Eye and Throat Chakra for more assertive communication and alertness. It is a great stone to assist in astral travel. This great balancer helps those who talk too much and allows for those who need to be expressive when they have a tendency to hold back. This opens our psychic intuition and gets us acquainted with our inner selves. It is a stone that stimulates creativity, giving access to a fountain of ideas, images and awareness of things around us. This is a wonderful stone for decisiveness and decision making.

Black Onyx: This stone was used to promote fidelity. Excellent for centering/aligning the total person with higher powers. Use by Indian tribes to banish grief, enhance self-control, make wise decisions, encourage happiness and find good fortune. Onyx will retain memory of the physical occurrences surrounding a person. A strong stone to use in psychometry because it tells the story of the wearer. A strength-giving stone. Onyx is for those who are flighty by nature. A strengthening stone that can help you approach a lesson or task with greater self-confidence.

Blue Chalcedony: A type of Quartz that heads a family which includes Agate, Carnelian, Jasper, Tiger's Eye, and Onyx. Chalcedony helps ease self-doubts and makes one more reflective. It is used to ease bad dreams. Cleansing in nature, this stone will promote healing. Blue is used to open the Throat Chakra and helps with communication and self-expression.

Citrine: This stone is very versatile and is used for mental and emotional clarity, problem solving, memory issues, will power, optimism, confidence and self-discipline. It reduces anxiety, fear and depression. Citrine energizes every aspect of life. They can guide you to harness and utilize your creative energy. Citrine helps us analyze events and steer us in a positive direction. They work to develop inner calm and security and

makes us less sensitive and more open to constructive criticism. It can dispel negative feelings and helps us to accept the flow of events.

Petalite: also known as Castorite, is highly spiritual. It has been called the “Stone of the Angels” (not to be confused with Angelite) and will help one connect with one’s guides and enhances your angelic connection. It is also said to dissolve negativity. Petalite has been used on vision quests for strength, protection, and peace. It will balance one’s yin/yang qualities, as well as one’s mind, body, and spirit. It also enhances one’s ability to feel energy in stones. Known as an aura calmer, this stone works on the Throat, Third Eye and Crown Chakra in particular.

Quartz: Quartz is the Master Healer and the “stone of power”! This crystal has the appearance of frozen water and clear quartz appears to look like ice! The natural tendency for quartz is for harmony. Quartz can both draw and send energy therefore it is effective for sending/receiving guidance. Quartz is used for transformation in healing and in all levels of change (mentally/emotionally, physically and spiritually). Quartz stimulates the natural crystal in body tissues and fluids to resonate at the highest healing frequency. Quartz works with All Chakra and master glands for balancing, cleansing and healing. It is the perfect stone for complete Aura balancing.

Selenite: This crystal is Gypsum. This white/clear striated crystal can look like snowy mountains or tumbled snowballs! Selenite is wonderful for mental focus, growth, luck, immunity, kundalini. These are centuries-old recordkeepers of events and information. Holding this crystal can help with visualizing and bringing white light/energy (higher ideas/consciousness) from a transpersonal point above your head down through body, out through feet into the earth/physical plane. May help physical and emotional letting go. This crystal is great for emotional and athletic flexibility. It helps to send healing to the earth, expands your sensitivity and field of awareness.

Snowflake Obsidian: This obsidian stone, which has inclusions of phynocryst, gives it a snowflake pattern on its surface. This stone allows us to recognize unnecessary patterns in our lives. Promotes self-esteem and confidence. This is a strong grounding stone and is known as “the protector”. It is said to “mirror one’s soul. This stone brings about objectivity and detachment. It reduces fantasy and escapism. Absorbs and dissolves anger, criticism, fear, and therefore is protective. This unusual black stone absorbs darkness and converts it to white light energy, which is used at the Root Chakra, encouraging one’s survival instincts and is grounding. This stone is used for transformation.

Snow River Quartz: This amazing quartz crystal is used for seeing into the future and discovering our congenital past. These clear quartz balls are amazing in their clarity on the inside and covered with a beautiful white frost on the outside. The ends are sliced off so that you can see into its deep translucent center. These “picture window” crystals are originally from the riverbeds of Brazil. The crystals are washed down out of the mountains and tumbled over and over by violent surging waters. This natural process gives the crystals their frosted look. They are the “gazing” stone, also called “seer quartz”. These stone evoke clarity, clear thinking and renowned insight.

Food for Thought: Eating for Winter

Within the Inuit tribes of the Arctic, the hunting, cooking and sharing of food was not only necessary, but a spiritual act as well. Buddha expressed, “to keep the body in good health is a duty, for otherwise we shall not be able to light the lamp of wisdom or keep our mind strong and clear”. According to Chinese Medicine, eating a moderate amount of all flavors sweet, salty, pungent, bitter and sour can help to keep your body balanced and regulated.

The Ayurvedic school of thought is similar. The source of fuel you find to nourish you on a daily basis changes as the seasons change. The demands for a healthier diet makes your journey more important. The Ayurvedic science of food is based on incorporating the 6 flavors (pungent, salty, sweet, bitter, sour and astringent) into each meal.

Salty taste is attributed to the kidney and urinary bladder, therefore adding some salty foods in your diet during Winter can improve the kidney and bladder function. Consider burdock root, eggs, fish, miso soup, nuts, tofu, and sea vegetables such as arame, hiziki, kelp, kombu and wakame.

In winter, it is important to eat foods that warm the body's core and keep it nourished. Use cooking methods such as steaming, roasting, stir frying or poaching in order to heat the food all the way through.

Avoid raw foods, which are cold in nature such as salads, cold fruits, ice (especially in drinks), ice cream and raw vegetables as these tend to cool the body.

Consider eating these foods for Winter:

1. Warm hearty soups and healthy lean meat and root vegetable stews, whole grains, and roasted nuts.
2. Cereals, grains, and legumes: brown rice, corn, millet, oatmeal, sorghum, soybeans, black gram, adzuki bean, red kidney bean, broad bean.
3. Meat, poultry and fish: chicken, turkey, shrimp, carp, eel, chicken eggs.
4. Root vegetables such as yams, sweet potatoes, yucca, potatoes, beets, turnips, ginger, ginseng, taro, burdock, carrots, parsnips, as well as, onions, chives, scallions, garlic, leeks, common mushrooms, shiitake mushrooms, mitake and reishi.
5. Herbs, spices, condiments, oils such as perilla leaf, peppermint, dandelion, honeysuckle flower, basil, parsley, wolfberry (gou gi berries), fleece-flower root, licorice, astragalus, rhubarb, ginger, pepper, honey, sesame oil.
- 6 Fruits and nuts: (at room temperature) apples, clemetines, cranberries, red grapes, grapefruit, kiwi, kumquats, passion fruit, persimmons, pomegranates and rhubarb.

Making It Happen

Life is a culmination of moments we create for ourselves. We have an obligation to follow our hearts. We can no longer suppress our desires, dreams or spiritual life journeys based on the ideas, wants and needs of others. It is our birthright to be who we desire to be. If it is those who say they love us, yet hold us back, then they are only loving you with their conditions, not yours.

We must be allowed to fall and fail, to reach out and go forth. We must take the opportunities granted us and create opportunities that are not. The only one standing in our way is ourselves.

Let go of the fear and reservations. Release the doubt and ties that bind you to what brings you down. Walk away from the negative, overwhelming obstructions standing in your way. Be free of anyone or any belief that makes you feel less than who you want to be.

These are the first steps on your personal, spiritual journey.