

## Seasonal Health – Autumn: the Metal Element



Like all ancient cultures, the ancient Chinese lived in close relationship with nature. Their experience and understanding of the cycles of growth and decline that manifested in day and night summer and winter influenced how they thought and acted in every aspect of their lives, including medicine.

These Chinese sages tell us that a well-ordered, long life depends on living in harmony with the depth of quiet and peacefulness of winter, the blossoming and new beginnings of spring, the warmth and radiance of summer, the savory fullness of late summer and the clear, light inspiration of fall. They named each of these seasons after one of the 5 elements and declared that all of creation is made of Water, Wood, Fire, Earth and Metal. These seasons, or elements, are seen in nature. Each season has a particular quality and role to play in our gardens, in farmer's fields and in our lives – they exist inside each one of us and in all of life

The metal element gives us the capacity to see and honor our uniqueness. Just as the trees display their full colors in final preparation to “let go” of the leaves, we too must come out of our full color and late-summer and prepare to “let go”. Autumn is the downward turn of the year. Physically we experience less light and colder temperatures. Mentally we feel more serious. Emotionally we many experience grief. Spiritually we look at what is important. We try to rectify and reconcile our lives.

The movement of autumn can seem sober and harsh. It is about trimming and honing our boundaries. Autumn has very much to do with the concept “be here now” and the ability to acknowledge each moment as precious and complete.

The autumn in Chinese Medicine is identified as the Metal Element. The officials of the Metal Element are the lungs and the colon. The movement of the lung official is rhythmic. We fill the inhale and release with the exhale: In – Out. We not only breathe physically, we also breathe mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The quality of the breath is essential to our well-being.

The movement of the colon official has to do with letting go of what we find is no longer useful. This is a critical function for health. We cannot know the pure essential nature of who we are if we are filled with waste-physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually.

We need to honor that all we honestly have in life is this moment. Meditation helps us remember. Being conscious of our breathing helps us remember. The challenge of the “metal” within us is to live cleanly and crisply.



*Receive fully now - Let go now. My wish for all of us is to cultivate a season of preparing for and returning to the darkness so that we can free ourselves from what binds us and find peace in the coming stillness.*

Written by Sally Laux RN, M.Ac.  
Licensed Acupuncturist