

# Seasonal Health

## Late Summer – The Earth 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 and manifested in day and night, summer and winter influenced how they thought and acted in every aspect of their lives, including medicine.

Late summer is the season that holds the energy of the Earth Element. We, like the earth, experience the changing of the seasons with us. Can you feel a slight heaviness starting to happen as we move out of the expansive lightness of summer?

The earth element is how we hold our connection to the world and what we harvest on a daily basis and in our life. It is the ground beneath our feet. Can you feel it? What keeps you grounded? Centered? Our capacity to nourish and take care of ourselves comes from the earth with us. The foods we eat, the kind of thoughts we have about ourselves, the spiritual practices of caring about others and being of service are all cultivated and transformed through the earth element. The fertility of our soil (earth) to hold the roots we put down is essential to feel well placed in the world.

There are, what the Chinese describe, Officials in the body that correspond to each of the elements. It is the Officials job to carry out the work assigned to them to support our health. The Officials of the Earth element are the Spleen and Stomach. The stomach is noted to be the official of rotting and ripening. It receives the nourishment and distills it to be transformed and distributed throughout the body by the spleen. The spleen and stomach work not just with the physical nourishment but the taking in of thought and knowledge and transforming it. How often have you been at a lecture, school or meeting and you or someone might say “I just can’t take in anymore...” That is the mental capacity of the spleen and stomach. The spleen and stomach are responsible for our ability to digest events that happen our lives that change us in some way. Here we might hear phrases like “I just couldn’t stomach that” or “I’ll never be the same after...” This address the spiritual axiom of the Earth.



From this description of the earth element it is easy to imagine a person who’s earth is imbalanced. All sorts of digestive problems (nausea, vomiting, eating disorders, ulcers, poor appetite) arise out of the earth not functioning well. Difficulty with worry and obsession reflect an inability to transform thought. Trouble taking care of ourselves and always taking care of others reflects possible strain in the earth element. On the contrary, only thinking about ourselves (self centeredness) is injurious to the earth.

My wish for all of us is to cultivate a season of abundance with good meals, full hearts, and peaceful homes.

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