

GET IN TOUCH WITH THE JUICINESS OF SUMMER

by Helene Ramos, Erin Johnson & Linda Capacchione

Every season has its special rhythms and qualities – the sounds, scents, sights and sensations that make it unique. For most of us our seasonal responses were seeded early in life as we reveled naturally and innocently with our childhood experiences. But time passes and life becomes complicated, contained and perhaps increasingly disconnected from the power of the natural world. The seasons become distant - signposts along the way through daily life - rather than opportunities to feel, draw upon and enrich our connection with earth energy and its natural flow.

In our frayed, overstressed world what would it be like to move in concert with nature's rhythms and why might it be beneficial?

Think of the earth as a huge natural generator/resonator. As our planet travels around and within it's natural cycles the quality of its vibration vary and express themselves in patterns that include the weather, tidal shifts, movement of the earth's crust and the seasons. Because of the earth's large relative size, its vibrational "song" affects everything on and in it. If we can become conscious of this song and work intentionally with nature's rhythms, we can draw this strength into our lives and move easily through the seasons, like a skilled surfer riding a powerful wave.

The dizzying growth of Spring gives way to the bounty and ripe energy of Summer. Now there is raging energy in the web of life – instinctive and self-reflective, focused on being fully in the present moment. To envision connecting to this deeply flowing river as a way to rejuvenate after a draining week, try this simple exercise.

Either sit on the earth or take a slow walk in nature maintaining a softly focused attention. Bring into your mind the intention of connecting with and drawing the juiciness of the surroundings

Summer. Revel in the opening of your senses. As you welcome in this palpable energy and draw it in through all five senses, you begin to attune your body, mind and spirit to the rhythm of the season. Slowly breathe in the experience, and then gently let it go. Breathe it in through your eyes, ears, and nose. Hold it within and then let it go again. Silently express your gratitude to your surroundings for this gift of connection. Then come back to your normal state of awareness feeling refreshed, invigorated and in sync with your environment.

Perhaps you've noticed too that each season also has it's own sounds and vibrations. These qualities – as contained in various types of music – can be used to connect us to the seasonal pulse. From the powerful sounds of drums to soothing chimes reminiscent of the breeze, music reaches deep inside of us and invites us into an experience of life in an almost cellular way. The transformative potential in music has been part of human consciousness from earliest recorded history. Music has been used by healers throughout the ages to provide comfort and nurturance; to prompt the body's own innate healing capacity; and to integrate body, mind and spirit for enhanced well-being. Anyone can benefit from the healing potential in music, especially if they work with a practitioner who incorporates music into their healing work. Or, you can bring to mind the summer songs in your own collection and play them to get in

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with the seasonal energies. Activities shift outdoors. Movement and time seems to slow and colors become bright and saturated. Working within the unthreatening framework and language of the arts lets individuals cultivate more compassion for themselves and others through a nurturing approach that fosters gratitude and generosity. Art therapy provides a way for

people to come to terms with emotional conflicts, increase self-awareness, and express unspoken and often unconscious concerns about their lives.

Studies have shown that art therapy

allow you to become more adaptable to change, develop more effective coping skills, decrease stress-related symptoms – including chronic pain – and will significantly decrease any anxiety, or depression, while improving concentration, creativity, and increased immune system functioning. If you wish to enjoy this type of meditation, classes are offered at several different venues in and around Charlottesville. One community that focuses on mindfulness or developing more awareness in the present moment is called the Insight Meditation Community of Charlottesville. You can visit them on line at www.imeditation.org.

Helene, Linda and Erin will be co-facilitating a workshop for healing arts professionals on June 20 and 21. The highly experiential workshop will focus on practical skills that foster connection with the seasonal energies through imagery, music, movement, art, mindfulness practice and communal dreaming. Practitioners will be able to translate these practical skills into work with their clients. CEUs/contact hours



helps people uncover hidden emotions, reduce stress, fear and anxiety, and provide a sense of personal freedom.

Perhaps this Summer is the season to create an "outdoor studio" experience for yourself in nature. You can collect natural objects found on your walk or gather recycled materials - bottles, paper and metal – to create a piece of art that incorporates them to honor and conserve the earth's resources. Or consider using inexpensive tempera paints, watercolors or chalk to express how you feel after using the nature meditation described above.

Scientific research also supports benefits shown in studies where people have practiced Mindfulness Meditation. The benefits

include greater awareness, self-trust, self-acceptance, enhanced appreciation for life, serenity with difficulties and increased acceptance of life's challenges. Just a few minutes spent daily in becoming aware of what you are experiencing in the moment will

are available. See the ad of page 8 of this issue for further information.

Erin Johnson, LPC is a therapist in private practice in Charlottesville, Virginia with over 20 years experience providing individual and family therapy. She is a Guided Imagery and Music and MARI/Mandala Assessment trainer and has presented numerous workshops on music and imagery for healing and wellness, creativity, and stress reduction. www.erinjohnsonlpc.com

Linda Capacchione is a Licensed Professional Counselor and provides individual group and family therapies for adults, adolescents and children in her private practice. She has over 20 years of experience, working in schools, residential treatment centers and outpatient settings. Linda offers experiential modalities that blend creative arts and movement to enhance body-mind-spirit integration and processing. www.lindacap.com

Helene Ramos is in private practice in Charlottesville where she works with people at life's turning points, guiding them to approach change with energy and courage as they integrate the spiritual dimension of their journey. She brings together energy medicine, Shamanic practice, hypnotherapy, MARI/Mandala and dream work into a program uniquely designed for each individual. www.heleneramos.com



into your awareness. Become quiet and gently observant - notice what flirts with your attention. Perhaps it is the buzzing of bees in the humid golden air, the richness of the honeysuckle or the tang of the crisp sea air. It could be a plant, insect or bird that draws you into

a seasonal mood. Discover the music that invites you to feel centered as well as energized and surround yourself with it when you would like to embody these qualities.

Expression through movement, art and meditation also benefits from changing