

SEASONS OF OUR LIVES TRACK

SEASON OF SPRING

Circle of Life

Listen! In the earth, the seeds are stirring and making noise, like the birds whose song has been silenced by winter. Now the snow is being devoured by sun, our elder, and in the branches, the persistence of our prayers is bringing the birds to life.

When the season of spring returns to the land, a festival of life and light abounds. Suddenly, there are longer days of sunlight, earlier dawns, later sunsets. Earth sails along in her faithful rotation. With each cycle, she leans in closer to the light and heat of the life-giving sun. Windy breezes fill the air with an odor of freshness. What once appeared dead begins to stir. Each wintered thing wakes up, raises its drowsy head, and sniffs the air to confirm the truth of spring's arrival. The slow pace of winter is left behind and there is a surge of invigorating activity for humans, creatures, and vegetation.

As spring arrives, the creatures that have hidden in the dark folds of winter's skirts are lured by the light and warmth of the penetrating sun. Bird songs echo with mating calls. Woodchucks shuffle along in the rain, glad to be above ground again. Mother bears nudge their little cubs to explore the intriguing life unfolding before them. Fish begin to move through thawed waters. It is a jubilant time for nature. Freedom is in the air.

The tantalizing rains of spring and the convincing rays of sunshine are too enticing for nature to resist. Delicate green shoots triumphantly push their way through the remnants of winter's long stay. Everywhere there is evidence of spring's entrance. There is much to marvel at: tiny seeds in newly warmed soil shed their husks, thick walled bulbs open their protective doors to allow future flowers to step out; shrubs and trees model their emerging leave. Each nook and cranny of earth explodes with life.

One can almost hear the voice of this birthing season calling: "Now! Now! Now is the time to resurrect!" Fields and forests are filled with newly born creatures. Fronds of fern unfold. Grasses rise up out of the earth, strong and tall. After months of drab grays and bleak browns, brilliant color returns to the land. Bright faced tulips, hyacinths, and daffodils herald the advent of the season. Beautiful blossoms of redbud, magnolia, and cherry trees sway with joy in the spring breezes. The hills and valleys become a palette filled with shades of meadow green, mossy green, leafy green, forest green, grassy green, ivy green.

While spring is a time of intense growth, it is also a time to refresh, clean, and empty out the clutter that has collected during the sedentary months. Cars are washed and waxed; windows are opened to get rid of stale air; gardens are cleared for planting; newly grown lawns are moved; closets and basements are divested of their refuse.

Spring has its shadow side. Its fragrant, colorful blossoms can give rise to irritating allergies. Sudden warmth often melts snow too quickly. Unending rains may overwhelm saturated soil, causing severe flooding. Seasonal currents of change can spawn tornadoes, bringing damaging winds or hailstorms. Vibrancy and fresh beginnings of growth, however, are what dominate spring. These lively energies awaken and move through the heart of creation.

The human spirit also experiences seasons of springtime. The periods of depression and discouragement that visit our inner landscape do not last forever. Like rays of sun breaking through the storm clouds, currents of hope flow through the dark walls of despondency. Blessings arise as new growth take place. At first, we may not trust this stirring of life within, especially if our winter sojourn has been intense and lengthy. Doubt and hesitation may fight against the buds of hope trying to break through. The spirit of renewal is strong, however, and eventually it gently takes over the heart.

It sometimes happens that one's spirit is so wintered and frozen that it cannot enter the season of spring without some assistance. Just as a gardener is helpful in complementing and assisting the great work that nature has done in the soil, so too, a very broken spirit may need a gardener of the soul, a counselor to companion it into new growth.

In the heart's springtime, the inner self awakens. Seeds of growth, hidden in the midst of winter's bleakness, germinate and sprout. That which has been longed for and greatly desired is gradually brought forth and heralded with gladness. Visions, dreams, and yearnings for the future unfold. The gray moods, the frozen love, the sorrow and grief, the overwhelming angst, the dread, and depression, all this slowly slips away as trust and enthusiasm rejuvenate the wintered spirit. Like the springtime land, so the inner land is thawed and re-energized. A sense of loving and being loved warms the interior places that were cold and dormant in wintertime.

The emotional clutter and the old debris that prevented clear thinking are cleansed. Spaciousness and openness expand like the wings of a great swan. Inner freedom is discovered. Confidence returns. Creative endeavors begin to emerge. Like the songbirds chirping as they return from the south, the heart begins to sing again.

The interior spring stretches the human spirit toward growth the way the sun stretches plants. This inner movement can come about with a new job bringing affirmation and assurance of one's abilities. The new start could come for a successful surgery, a restored relationship, or a decision to let go of an old hurt. It might be something totally unexpected like a taste of joy rising up, presenting itself as clearly as the first colorful face of crocus smiling in the snow. Never did the human spirit believe it could feel so happy or be so immersed in the goodness of life.

There are times when spring enters the heart dramatically. An unexpected insight can bring about immense clarity and encouraging self revelation. A song, a vivid dream, a piece of poetry, meeting a kindred spirit, a walk through the woods can become a beautiful inner rising akin to a

resurrection experience. When these spring-like encounters take place, our inner search is blessed with a new and invigorating sense of purpose and direction.

The momentum of birthing and the vibrancy of life pulse everywhere. In this season of the soul, there is awe and wonder at the changes taking place. Spring generates surprise, delight, unmitigated joy, and newly found optimism. Now is the time to enjoy what is emerging from within, to savor the taste of hope, and to trust in what the future promise is. It is the time to believe in growth and to give oneself to it wholeheartedly.

Like all seasons, spring will not stay forever. It will pass into summer where another dimension of growth will reveal itself. Every season's entrance and departure is part of the great turning of the circle of life. Spring will return to the heart when it is time.