

SEASONS OF OUR LIVES TRACK

SEASON OF SUMMER

Circle of Life

“Summer is the season when nature comes into its fullness”. --Angeles Arrien

Summer inherits spring’s passionate urge for growth. Spring nurtures the seeds for new life and summer energizes them. It is a season of fullness and productivity. The long days of summer’s light encourage anything that has enough moisture to stretch its utmost toward the sun. In the early growth of spring, many shades and textures of green wake up smiling. As summer steals the show, the vegetation matures to a deeper green and grows thick and sturdy. Blossoms readily fill out into fruits and vegetables.

The abundance of produce signals the beauty and bounty of this rich period, for summer is the season of ripening and abundance. Thick fields of grain wave their green and golden stems. Farmers markets, verdant vineyards, productive gardens, lush flower beds, and fruit-laden orchards all give witness to the power of light and growth in this season.

Summer is the period of high temperature when solar rays are most directly focused on the planet. Intense energy accompanies these powerful waves of heat. When the sunlight is very strong it produces sweat, good old perspiration that rolls down our body on sweltering, hot days. Some avoid this heat by seeking air conditioned places, but others simply accept the sweaty times as a part of summer’s unique presence.

People, creatures, and the land are affected as temperatures rise. Each one’s energy grows more sluggish with heat and humidity. Summer becomes a “lazy time” of sitting outdoors on lawn chairs and enjoying easy moments of relaxation. It is the season to gather around campfires telling stories, to watch fireflies at dusk, or to do nothing at all.

When the sun is too strong, it overwhelms growing things. Grass withers and garden plants quit producing. The land begs for water, yearning for relief from the unceasing heat. By early August, burnt edges of brown can be seen. In some parts of the country, the penetrating sun turns the land into a dry, straw-like desert.

In spite of the relentless sun, summer is a time of playfulness and leisure. It beckons us outdoors. There are lively sounds like the neighborhood’s lawn mower on an early Saturday morning, cheers at baseball games, and the pop and boom of firecrackers on the fourth of July. If you listen, you can hear summer’s hum in the locusts, crickets, tree toads, and cicadas. The songs of whippoorwills, cardinals, mockingbirds, robins, and loons on the lake reverberate everywhere. This hot season is evident in the splashing water of swimming pools, the voices of children at play in the park, and laughter at the zoo.

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No matter where we live, summer brings a certain kind of freedom from care that is unlike any other time of the year. This season is full of playfulness. Imagine what summer would be like without vacations, time at the pool, and the beach, barbeques, fishing, and camping, biking and hiking, weddings and reunions, state and county fairs.

There are striking similarities between the season of fruitfulness and our inner life. Our interior summer is also full of light and growth. These two features are essential elements of our spiritual transformation, just as they are necessary for nature's growth and development. When we are "in the light" we are moved by an energy that assures us of our self-worth and our potential for growth. This assurance leads us into a period of energetic productivity where we develop our talents and gifts with enthusiasm. During this time, we are especially drawn toward activity that gives meaning to our life.

It is in our spiritual summer that we see glimpses of truth that have been hidden from us. Discoveries we would doubt or quickly pass by in another season are revealed and accepted. The light of our mind provides clarity and perception so that we can more easily find direction for our journey. There is less confusion and hesitancy in our thought and decision making, fewer tensions and turmoil in our emotional space, more resonance between our inner and outer experiences.

During our inner summer, we know we are growing. There's a robust surge of spiritual vitality. We long to be faithful to our truest self. The desire to become more healed and whole grows more stronger in us. During this time, we often sense the presence of divinity within ourselves and others. Sometimes an immense passion for the holy surges through our spirit. We feel as though we could give our all for deeper communion with this Beloved One, confident of a divine light within us that will never go out.

Life has less struggle when we are in our spirit's summer season. We are likely to experience playfulness and lightness of heart. An easy gratitude fills us because our work and relationships move along well. We feel productive and fulfilled as we recognize how we are contributing to the betterment of our world.

Our interior summertime moves us toward fullness and ripening. Perhaps reading a book helps us to develop a fuller dimension of ourselves. A personal relationship might become stronger, enhancing our enthusiasm. Our summer growth could be a retreat or a seminar that nudges us toward something deeper and more vibrant. It might be an insight from our journal or our prayers that stretches us, or the learned practice of stopping to breath once in a while so that we enjoy the now.

The shadow side of our spiritual summertime is that we can get overly involved in using our gifts and talents and begin to burn ourselves out. Just as the hot sun burns the green foliage and withers it. If our thrust into activity and productivity is not balanced with leisure and play, our productivity will soon limp and our ability to maintain high energy will dwindle and collapse.

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For the most part, however, summer is a very positive and encouraging time for our spiritual journey. It is a fulfilling and productive moment on the road of life that we want to hold onto forever. However, like all season, this one will not last. It will move into the season of autumn where we will be challenged to let go of the fullness of summer. We will be asked to leave behind some of the joy, light, and enthusiasm we have cherished in our precious summer passageway. Like each of the four seasons, summer will return again to our hearts when it is time, for every season's entrance and departure is part of the ever-turning circle of life.