

# **We Are Rhythm Are You 'N Sync?**

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There is a rhythm in the way the day turns to night, the night turns to day; the tides roll in and the tides roll out; winter turns to spring, and spring to fall, and then back to winter; a heart beats, contracting and expanding; the breath flows in and out, in and out; world economies expand, and then contract, and then expand again... and so on. On a typical day, in our pursuit to accomplish and prevail, we pay no attention to the enormity and sophistication of this "flow." We often make choices that put us in direct opposition to these rhythms, and then wonder why we're exhausted and life feels like a struggle. Regardless of any heroic human intentions or efforts that may or may not be exerted during the course of a day, this rhythm persists. We can depend on that.

Dropping into this rhythm, after opposing and ignoring it for a lifetime, feels like the difference between riding a wave and crashing into it. A basic understanding and respect for the principles of nature can help us to re-align, gather our resources, and stop struggling against the waves of life!

Ayurveda is the 5,000-year-old "science of life" derived from India which teaches us how to align with the elements and cycles of nature. By doing this, we can reduce enormous amounts of physical and mental stress, improve our immunity and maximize our energy--naturally and sustainably! Ayurveda teaches us how to "go with the flow" and use the abundance and intelligence within the natural cycles to our advantage, rather than depleting ourselves by struggling against them.

Aligning with the seasons is a great place to begin. In the fall and winter, the air is cold, the wind whips, the nights get longer and the days shorter, and nature dries out. We can observe this by looking at the bare trees and the brown grass at this time of year. As such, we, in our bodies, have more "air" in our constitution during the fall and winter; we feel cold, our skin, nasal membranes and other bodily tissues may dry out, and we have less energy. This is all natural. However, if we choose a diet abundant in cold, dry foods (like salads and dry cereals), run ourselves into the ground (who doesn't during the holiday season?), and allow ourselves to get dehydrated, we'll dry out too much and become weak and susceptible to colds, flu, and all kinds of other things. By choosing warm, moist, and heavier foods during this time of year, such as root vegetables, sturdy whole-grains, animal-based foods, soups, stews, and foods prepared with plenty of high-quality oil, we will be well insulated and experience better strength and immunity. Longer periods of sleep (as nature would indicate by the longer hours of daily darkness) will also serve us well.

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In the spring, the weather is heavy, damp, boggy, and congested. The spring reflects the "earth" and "water" elements. We can observe this in the rain, the mud, and the abundance of growth that occurs as a result; which leads to the congested quality we experience when allergy season takes hold! At this time of year, nature provides bitter greens and berries to help us naturally cleanse and release the excess from the heavier, more sustaining foods of winter, helping us to reduce fat, detoxify and rejuvenate. This provides us what we need to feel lighter and more energized as the daylight hours become longer. Foods that are harvested in the spring are "catabolic," or reducing in nature (greens and berries), helping to break down bodily excesses; as opposed to winter foods which are "anabolic" in nature (animal foods, dairy products), which build bodily tissues. Adding these spring-harvested foods to your diet, while reducing the heavier, creamier, and more substantial foods of winter at this time, will help to reduce excess congestion in our bodies, as well as allergy symptoms and infections that can result. A longer and more vigorous daily exercise routine will also support a feeling of lightness and vibrant energy in spring.

Summer, then, is related to the "fire" element. Fire is the energy of transformation; transforming food into fuel, ideas into action, and plans into productivity. During this time of year, most of us will be fine sleeping less and being more active during the day, because the sun, the source of all life, burns brightest and highest in the sky during this time of year, giving abundant warmth, color, and vitality to everything it touches, including our bodies. With the longest periods of daylight that we experience all year, summer is the time to go outside, be active, and nourish ourselves with naturally sweet, cooling, and energy-dense foods such as watermelons, cucumbers, lettuce, basmati rice, chicken, and beans. Because of the abundance of natural heat, it's important to reduce foods that are spicy, salty and sour at this time of year, as these can contribute to too much heat in the body, possibly causing us to get too acidic, burn out and/or become dehydrated.

**Action item:** Examine whether you are effectively taking the cues from nature in order to ride the wave, rather than crash into it:

Are you getting the proper amount of rest?

Are the foods you are choosing most often supporting you during the current time of year, or making you more vulnerable?

Are you exercising enough? Too much?

Note signs of balance: (examples: abundant energy, sleeping well, stable mood, good strength, appropriate appetite and elimination)

Note signs of imbalance: (examples: weakness, tiredness or fatigue, frequent

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congestion or colds, sugar or salt cravings, insomnia, depression, digestive difficulties, constipation or diarrhea, injuries)

Notice where your mind goes in order to answer these questions; If you find yourself reverting to some “guideline” or expert advice, bring your mind back into your body. Let your body be the expert!

**References:**

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**Yoga references: Samadhi (union), Svadhyaya (self-study)**

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