

Autumn Color

What does the season of change, reflection and beauty mean for you, your clients and your business?

Autumn is by far my favorite time of year. It means that the suffocating heat of summer is coming to a close and a beautiful symphony of color is on its way to Texas. Kids go back to school, and summer activities wind down in preparation for cooler-weather sports like football and more at-home family time.

Autumn is a season of great change, representing a period of maturity or the beginning of decline. It is a combination of beauty and aging—an explosion of beautiful color, and then the “letting go” of life, yielding to the cycle that repeats itself over and over again: birth, growth, aging and death. Autumn reminds us of our mortality and the limited time we have on Earth to leave our mark. What can we learn from this glorious 3-month period of change that can positively impact our lives and businesses?

Changes for You

The beauty of autumn has always given me cause to reflect on my life and choices during the previous months of the year. What decisions have I made? Which directions have I taken? Half of my year is gone; am I following the right path? Have I matured in the areas I wanted and needed to? If not, now is the time to act. It is a time to let go of things and activities that do not match my principles and values.

To give yourself an opportunity to answer your own questions about *your* life, set aside time for reflection. Most of



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Am I focused on the people and things that are important to me?
- Are there personal habits that I need to let go of?
- What roles do I play in my life, and how can I be better in those roles (i.e., family member, friend, father, husband, business owner, cook)?
- How can I add beauty to my life (i.e., plant fall flowers, spend more time outdoors, go camping, listen to music, etc.)?
- If I am harvesting what I have sown, have I sown the right things? If not, what can I do differently to get the harvest I want for next fall?
- What does pre-retirement look like to me? Is there a specific age at which I would like to retire or cut back?
- Am I taking the steps that will allow me to retire when I want?
- As some birds migrate to avoid cold weather, have I learned to avoid situations that are detrimental to me?

us know what is right for ourselves based on our deepest desires and values. With regular quiet time, you can get to the heart of what matters most to you.

Changes for Your Clients

Most of my personal training clients represent autumn to me, in that they have been training with me for 10–18

years and many are in their 50s. They are generally focused on fitness maintenance, although their programs still need to be altered regularly to keep producing results and to keep people's interest. On the other hand, these clients have trained with me long enough to have a strong exercise foundation—with their experience, there is no more need to convince them of the value of exercise. They have seen the positive lifestyle results for themselves.

Fitness and exercise are a way of life for these long-term clients. However, the autumn of their lives is a time to rethink their workout regimens—to lessen harmful impact activities and substitute lower-impact activities, to ease the strain on joints and old injuries. At this point you need to keep your clients fit, injury free and motivated to stay strong as they continue through the aging process. How can you best help your clients living in the autumn of their lives?

Changes for Your Business Model

After 21 years as a personal trainer and coach, I am experiencing the autumn of my business. I am reaping what I have sown and enjoying the fruit of my labors. I have lessened my work hours over the last 10 years to reflect the importance of family and simplicity in my life. I am focusing more on relationships and less on things and accomplishments. However, the never-ending task of keeping my business alive and prosperous is still a full-time job. Even a mature business needs nurturing and marketing. What do you need to know to thrive in the autumn of your business?

I have shortened my client appointment hours to 20 hours per week over the course of the last several years, but I want to keep those hours always “full.”

I have also raised my fees over the years to make it possible to live comfortably while working shorter days. Thus I have the quality of life I

YOUR BUSINESS AGES ALONG WITH YOU

- Take time to reflect on the early days of your career. What are you thankful for? What have you learned? How can you use your knowledge to help others reach this place in their careers?
- Now that your business has aged along with you, what do you want it to look like in the immediate future? Do you want to cut back your hours? Do you want to focus more strongly on a different aspect of your business?
- Like the animals, are you gathering the resources you need for the winter of your life?
- Have you grown a thicker coat so that the harshness of life is less harmful to you?



was aiming for, with time for my family, me, relaxation and travel.

Stage of Life

Autumn is the beginning of aging for plant life and people. It is a season wrought with change, but change that can be beautiful. It represents our 50s and early 60s, when the kids are grown and gone, our careers are changing or slowing down and thoughts of retirement are on the horizon. It is a period of life when we re-evaluate our health; the ways we spend our time; and whether we have relegated important things to the back burner. It is the perfect opportunity to enjoy more travel and fun with less responsibility. Autumn is a reminder that it is vital to be flexible, open to change and willing to let go of things that don't matter. Clients may change their exercise schedules to be more available to kids and grandkids. They may want to be less locked into fixed workout times. They may need changes in their exercise programs because of aging joints and disease.

Winds of Change

Autumn is a beautiful representation of aging and change. The crispness in the air mingled with the exploding display of color gets you excited about the days ahead, yet the season can leave you with

a feeling of melancholy. Soon the tree branches will be bare, and will be drawing to a close. An uncertain economy this year may have left you scraping for business and struggling to stay busy.

But there is one lesson we can all learn from the coolness of this season: change is coming once again. Embrace the wisdom of your older clients, and learn to age and change gracefully in accord with whatever life hands you. Know that as you and your business age, your goals and desires will change. Remain open to that thought as this year marches quickly to a close, and listen to your heart about what you want your personal life and business to be. In the autumn season of life, make sure you savor and enjoy every moment, focusing on the people and activities that are truly important to *you*. Let's all learn the valuable lesson that autumn teaches us: aging and letting go are inevitable, but it is within our power to do both, gracefully and beautifully. ■

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