



Rhode Island Behavioral Health Training

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Recognizing Seasonal Shifts for Fall Wellness

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Fall is a season full of visible changes: shorter days, cooler mornings, crisper nights, changing leaves, harvested crops, and animals preparing for hibernation or migration. As humans, we experience seasonal shifts as well, even when our schedules and life's expectations don't change with the calendar. In this article, we'll return to Seasonal Pattern Alignment (SPA) as a way of noticing these changes and responding with intention. Remember that just as nature changes with the season, our needs, goals, and approaches to caring for ourselves and our communities can also change with the seasons.

Let's start by noticing the environmental shifts that mark autumn. Daylight decreases and darkness arrives earlier. Temperatures fall, which may change the way and amount of time we spend outdoors. Plants and animals redirect their energy: leaves change and fall, crops reach maturity, harvests occur, and some animals migrate, change routines, store resources, or start preparing for dormancy. Each of these seasonal shifts remind us that transition, slowing down, preparing for change, and conservation of our resources are normal seasonal responses.

What do these changes look like for us? Remember that not everyone responds to fall the same way, and SPA isn't about assuming a particular seasonal reaction or reality. That said, there are several natural patterns that often shift for many of us. We may notice

- changes in our levels of energy and motivation
- shifts in sleep and waking patterns, appetites, and routines
- differences in our moods as days grow darker and cooler
- a longing for different types of activity, rest, or connections

The goal in noticing these things isn't to say that we should react in one way or another. It's more about being curious enough to notice our own patterns and see how these patterns create opportunities for new ideas and ways of being.

Remember: trees don't prevent leaves from falling, migrating animals don't pretend winter isn't coming, and harvest requires the ability to recognize when something has reached its season of completion. We have the ability to live out these seasonal practices in our own lives by learning what we can let go of, how we can prepare our bodies and spirits for seasonal shifts, and when habits, patterns, or wellness practices have reached the end of their usefulness in a particular phase of our lives.

As we look at fall as a season of harvest and preparation, we can use it as an opportunity to reflect, celebrate, and prepare for what's to come by asking ourselves reflective questions:

- **My fields:** Where have I grown this year?
- **My harvest:** What is ready to be gathered or celebrated?
- **My leaves:** What am I ready to release?
- **My cache:** What can I store, strengthen, or prepare for the months ahead?

By recognizing our seasonal shifts into fall, we can adapt to rather than avoid them. Our wellness practices can shift alongside the season rather than trying to preserve summer routines. A few ideas for shifting into fall are below. Try one or two that speaks to your needs headed into autumn!

- Adjusting our sleep and evening routines as darkness comes earlier
- Finding ways to intentionally seek daylight, movement, or outdoor time
- Changing the timing or types of physical activity we engage in
- Switching to seasonal, grounding foods or warm beverages
- Creating warmth, comfort, and sensory experiences in our spaces
- Staying intentional about social connections as people spend more time indoors
- Revisiting our workloads or expectations if our energy feels different
- Creating a morning ritual to ground ourselves as the day begins
- Identifying what we can complete, release, or carry forward

As we enter autumn, let's remember that seasonal wellness can begin with giving ourselves permission to change as the world around us changes. Rather than asking how we can hold on to the things that saw us through the passing seasons, let's learn to lean into asking what this season is inviting us to notice, release, protect, and prepare for.