

Transcript

Wynne Leon

Welcome to the sharing the Heart of the Matter podcast where we celebrate the storyteller in us all.

Speaker

Yes.

Wynne Leon

I'm Wynne Leon and in this episode Vicki Atkinson and I are with meditation, teacher, yoga teacher and massage therapist Deirdre Wilcox. As my teacher and friend for nearly 30 years, Deirdre has shared so much grounded wisdom with me. Of her many gifts, one that I love that is highlighted especially in this conversation is her ability to help frame what we are experiencing in biological terms. So she walks us through the shift from summer to fall in terms of the cues our bodies are receiving. And this leads to a huge aha for me about the persistent question I get at the end of the summer. Have we done enough? Deirdre suggests some practices that reduce the overwhelm as we move from the freedom and spontaneity of summer to the structure of autumn. One of the things I like most about her approach is that she understands that the things that have a chance to stick are the small ones, so she suggests some small. Changes for us to incorporate as we move towards fall ways that we can incorporate rituals to thoughtfully move from one season to the next. And one of my absolute favorites, an invitation to take it all in and notice what we did with our summer. Before we move on. I'm confident you'll love the scenic and beautiful places. We'll explore as we share the power of storytelling. We know you'll love it. Hi, Deirdre. Hello. It is so good to see you, my friend. And have you here with Vicki this time? Yes. Happy to see both of you. Hello. Hello. And we're starting. You know, we're recording this justice. Seattle starting to feel pretty fall like. And it's getting those cooler mornings. So I'm wondering if you have any favorite ways to celebrate this fall seasonal reset.

Deirdre Wilcox

That's a really good question, because I find that I'm influenced somewhat by the kind of fall we're having. So you know in the northwest, we're pretty well known for having these so-called Indian Summers where fall extends and we have warm warm days, but then the temperatures start to drop a little bit at night. Our fall feels a little bit slow in coming, even though we have the the markings of it around us and the beginnings of it. It's a slow wending through the transition from summer to fall, which? I appreciate one of the things I've been noticing in my practice just recently is that people have had very busy summers and you know, packed with activity. A lot of it very good. But they're tired and over saturated and ready to transition to something that has a little bit more of a predictable rhythm. So each season has its gift, and one of the things I love about the summer is there's more spontaneity. There are more activities. We don't do the rest of the year. We're likely to stay up late because our circadian rhythms are entrained with the longer days, which is important to recognize that one of the reasons we're wild and all over the place is because we're wired to be that way. The days are longer and. As is so perfect in nature, everything has a cycle and an end, and

so I like to start to acknowledge for myself. Some of the things that stand out from the summer so that I can pause for a moment, anchor it in, take some time to digest that. And then. Be more open to the autumnal energies and what's coming next.

Speaker

Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

What I'm finding or what I see? A lot of is. This non-stop motion we tend to be in creates a feeling of a blur. And one thing just bleeds into the next, and the overwhelm comes. From not pausing. Naming, anchoring, digesting and then going on. So I would say truly that, that specific. Practice is what helps me the most. And when I was younger, I I don't know if it's just an age thing, but I used to get really sad at Labor Day because I knew the days were shortening. I knew I.

Speaker

MHM.

Deirdre Wilcox

Had to. Go to school. And it just seemed like the death of joy and spontaneity.

Vicki Atkinson

And.

Deirdre Wilcox

Having to go back to doing things like when you're told how you're told, you know, very boxed up as A and or a or a youngster. Yeah. And I am. I see that around me that grief.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

That it's over and the relief that it's over. So it's holding both the grief and the relief, yeah.

Speaker

Mm-hmm.

Wynne Leon

You know, it's funny cause you spent a day with me and my family during the summer break it when we were on vacation and just, you know, five hours. We were so grateful to to see you. But it was so funny how we it was so unstructured. Right. We went from the beach to the pool to the. I mean, it just was. It was that flow of exactly what you're talking about, which is the long days, the just going with what's the freedom? So you know, we just spent one of those days with you and and I love your

that nugget that you just gave us of holding on to that to recognize how special that was as before we shipped.

Speaker

OK.

Deirdre Wilcox

Mm-hmm.

Speaker

Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

And how nourishing it is in its own way. We have so many different ways to be nourished, but that unstructured freedom, or a friend of mine called it, let's do the no plan. Plan. Literally, just go wherever you're pulled. It's so wonderful. It's so freeing, living. From that place of of desire. Pleasure, intuition. Connection. You know, for just a minute. There aren't the rules and the shoulds. We need that we need that we live in a very structured should based paradigm. And so the summer is just maybe that's what wears us out is we just get to. So and unstructured, yeah. But there is also, you know, the the true biology behind it which is, you know the summer is a work hard time when you think about. Growing our food, preparing to fill our stores with the growth of the summer, the potatoes, the carrots, people start canning their fruits and vegetables especially way back because they didn't have a way to refrigerate things. So once you gather the harvest. There's an intense time of work to. Have the harvest kept in such a way that it's available all summer or all winter. And so there really is a very intensive work time in the transition and maybe the modern day version of that is. Especially with children winding all that down, starting to put the things away that you might have out during the summer, you know the pool, the some of the hiking, the tents. And then starting to prepare for the school year. No. What are you going to put in the backpack now? Because what goes into the backpack now is different than your summer backpack. Yeah, right. And that, that ritual alone thinking about and when. And I have talked about this a little before is.

Speaker

Hmm.

Deirdre Wilcox

What do you need in your backpack? Now that is another practice that I like to have, and it could be a mental, emotional list like what I had in my backpack during the summer. Say was I love a lot of herbed iced tea, but I'm finding in my fall backpack I want warmer teas or more cinnamony teas. Not sweet. Please.

Vicki Atkinson

Mm-hmm.

Deirdre Wilcox

And in the backpack I need to. Let my body acclimate to shorter days, less light, which means I may be sleepy earlier and instead of being frustrated, I'm not getting as much done. To for a time try to respect the body's request for that, trusting that recalibrating my circadian rhythm to the new light levels will then put me in a place that's productive and I can do fine getting done. What I need to do. I don't need to worry so much about being pretty. Active. All the time.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

I think what Wynne said is the thing that she and I keep coming back to and and you said it so perfectly, Deirdre, it's the allowing the transition. We know it will occur, but building the awareness up and and also celebrating you know what was but also looking forward to the opportunities. That come, you know, in the change of seasons and I. I think you know when you talked about the routines changing, there are some rituals, you know, that invariably you know, unfold in a fall, there can be more coming together as opposed to dispersing, you know, and. And as you said from an agrarian point of view it it was, you know, necessary. There was this pulling in.

Wynne Leon

Hmm.

Vicki Atkinson

You know, for safety, getting the winter stores of food, but there was more in the old days, home and hearth. And I think people that see the opportunity for that whether it's, you know, returning to more home cooked meals or the savoring that can happen.

Wynne Leon

Thank you.

Vicki Atkinson

Then, but I think for a couple of of clients that I'm thinking of, if you don't slow down to give that transition out of summer into the next season into fall, it's due, you do feel like you're just bounced around. And it's, it can feel sudden and jarring, and maybe it's school schedules or, you know, the the change in sleep patterns. But there's so much to be said for recognizing the change and leaning into it, you know, accepting the things that maybe. Personally satisfying and and maybe the grief and relief you talked about, you know, looking forward to next summer, all of that. But it's the mindfulness that that makes it work.

Deirdre Wilcox

It I agree with that, Vicki and you know it doesn't the transition or some of the ritual around it. I think can be so simple it doesn't need to be a complicated situation, and in fact it really is not optimal when it is because for those who are already over saturated and overwhelmed, if you say, how about doing this and this and this to transition the ohh you know I've already right?

Vicki Atkinson

Enough.

Speaker

No.

Deirdre Wilcox

Don't add another germ thing for me, or it can be as simple as one of the things I like to do is, and I do this a lot with people I work with is a. Like what is the one thing you're gonna really miss about summer? What is the one thing you really look forward to about fall of that? Yeah, fall.

Vicki Atkinson

I love that.

Deirdre Wilcox

And I always look forward to in the fall, at least around here we have available for very short time, a few kinds of apples that only come out in September. You can get them then. And even within that short range, some of them are even last a week or two like the Coop will say, we have these apples. When they're finished, they're finished and they don't have them all the rest of.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

The year they even print out their apple list. So on week two we will have these from these regions Week 3. So I get I it's like my ritual what is what is the apple situation, right? Yeah. And the fresh pressed cider at this time of year is on parallel. You know, that's something to look forward to instead of the iced tea. So I think, OK, I'm not going to do iced tea, but I get to do cider now. Yeah. And I start to pull out one or two candles that maybe in a central location. Mm-hmm. That.

Speaker

Mm-hmm.

Deirdre Wilcox

Begin to signal the shorter days and how I'm going to add more light by lighting some more candles. There's the. Yeah. Thinness of it. There's the calm. There's the adding light. When darkness comes, you know it can like any number of things to us. Yeah, we've been adding a candle or two on the

dinner table. You know, just to symbolize that change and the coming together around that light, yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Uh, and there's something about a flame that can be really restorative and calming even in a candle small.

Deirdre Wilcox

Mm-hmm. Well. Exactly. And yeah, they can be the simplest of things. Or recognizing as an individual or as a family when you make your first big batch of soup.

Speaker

Hmm.

Deirdre Wilcox

You know. Hot soup isn't something we make in the summer. It's South, it's.

Speaker

Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

Watermelon food on the run, you know, which is delightful? Yeah. They begin to make soup and I make a bigger batch so that some of it can be frozen or eaten more than once. But it's the ritual of like.

Speaker

Mm-hmm.

Deirdre Wilcox

I'm going to make this soup now and it's the first soup of the season.

Vicki Atkinson

Yes. And doesn't it make the house smell fantastic?

Wynne Leon

Good, right, right.

Vicki Atkinson

Guys.

Deirdre Wilcox

And it's it's again home hearth heart. Just the feeling of we're gonna have soup. Hmm. And it's gonna be cozy with our candle and recognize. Might need to do our bedtime rituals sooner.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

Because of the light, so even if you don't go to bed sooner start the rituals sooner to the the shorter day so.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

That we're working. In synchronization, in honoring of the light that we're seeing and then our natural biological relationship to it, it's quite fine-tuned and animals you see it all the time, they start to gather to hibernate to you know they've stored their nuts and they're special. They have caches of these things where they need to.

Wynne Leon

M.

Deirdre Wilcox

UM. They the birds have flown the nest, so they start to migrate to a different place. I mean, it's all ritual and transitioned through every facet of our experience. You know what I love about this is my big aha. From what you've said so far is that you've put this feeling of.

Vicki Atkinson

Hello.

Wynne Leon

Have I done enough? To that bigger human history experience of we're naturally wired for that question.

Vicki Atkinson

Hmm.

Wynne Leon

And it isn't about whether we've swum enough or gone to the, you know, all the vacation places. It's about storing up, you know, working hard enough at the. That you know in the. Fields. Or the harvest the harvest. Have we done enough to prepare for winter? I mean you, you've put that in that bigger picture that just is it's mind blowing.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. At a DNA level, it's not.

Wynne Leon

Get that?

Deirdre Wilcox

Yeah, exactly right.

Wynne Leon

The question isn't just about whether I've enjoyed myself. The question is really baked into us. Am I prepared? Yes.

Deirdre Wilcox

Yeah. Do we have what we need to get through this next season knowing things may be lean and difficult? Yeah, that's the deeper driving question always is our. What informs so much is our biological hardwiring to survive at any cost, and so if our number one priority is biological preservation and safety.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

I think what we get lost is we forget that and misapply it into being hyper productive to the point of exhaustion. Yeah, all the projects have to be done. The garage has to be cleaned, the walls have to be painted, people are coming. We're already. Thinking about the. Holidays. It's like, whoa, yeah. Take up breath.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, yeah.

Wynne Leon

Break it down right?

Deirdre Wilcox

Yeah.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Deirdre Wilcox

And we start chanting, which is interesting. We start chanting a a narrative. Winter's coming. People get colds, people get sick, people get the flu, so we have to. We're going to be sick. People are going to be sick more. It's like, yeah, chanting this. We. Yeah, we gotta get the cold and cough medicine. We have to get our kleenexes. We have to prepare. We have all this anxiety around illness.

Speaker

Where?

Deirdre Wilcox

And that's part of the narrative that we're doing at this time of year too have. You gotten your flu shot? Yeah, those things aren't bad. But when we have the narrative so inscribed, are we actually setting ourselves up with the stress, which then wears down the immune system, which then makes you more vulnerable?

Speaker

Is.

Vicki Atkinson

To town.

Deirdre Wilcox

So the thing you're afraid of, right? Right.

Vicki Atkinson

Right. And it's blocking such a tight rope for people. I still think post COVID.

Deirdre Wilcox

So.

Vicki Atkinson

About not wanting to be isolated and alone, but also protecting you know oneself at the same time and our people threatening because they may, they may have some contagion. I it's it's such a challenge. I think for people about wanting to gather like you said but then not knowing when other people might be a danger.

Speaker

Hey.

Vicki Atkinson

In some way, cause there still is some of that phobia I think about. And as you said, it's your flu shot, your pneumonia shot your RSV vaccine, there's a lot of it that just. You get pummeled with it.

Deirdre Wilcox

Mm-hmm. Yeah. I think your point, Vicki and I think that, you know, something to consider. I think one of the important practices in in fall in addition to things we've talked about just from a health and Wellness standpoint is because we're coming into close spaces with more people. Uhm. And because it's a different rhythm entirely anyway, summer is very much of a kind of a high energy, fiery

season. People aren't as likely to be ill in the summer for many reasons, but in the fall, one thing we can do is.

Speaker

Mm-hmm. MHM.

Deirdre Wilcox

Be more mindful about how we're supporting our immune system. OK, so there. You know, for example, people who tend to be vulnerable, this is a good time to not go on a diet, but eat a little bit more cleanly. So go clean protein sources. So we have the building blocks, we need lots of leafy greens because they have a lot of antioxidants.

Speaker

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Deirdre Wilcox

To boost our immune some people benefit from upping the zinc a little bit as an immune booster. Some benefit from additional vitamin D if they're not getting outside enough, and they tend to.

Speaker

Mm-hmm.

Deirdre Wilcox

Struggle with sad. You know, the seasonal affective disorder and vitamin D there's promising research that has shown low levels are linked with depression, so it's not a bad idea to get your vitamin D level checked if that's easy, or add a little bit to your diet. It's not, you know, as long as it's not a huge amount.

Vicki Atkinson

MHM. Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

It's not a harmful. To make, yeah. Move.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, those are great suggestions. Oh my gosh.

Deirdre Wilcox

Please. You know, and start to pull out the things that. Revitalize the system and some of those are. Like the ginger and cinnamon and and warming spices as they call them. Ginger particularly is very good for digestion and as we know more and more, one of the things that. Indicates or supports a healthy immune system. Is your microbiome, so that's like eating a little bit more cleanly. Me. And consciously bringing down some of the sugar intake that we have during the summer is all in

support of that microbiome, which is so critical to not just the immune but depression. And you know we manage how resilient. We feel that we're just beginning to crack that and I think we're going to. Find more and more. That just having a healthy gut is gonna. Not. Eliminate the need for a lot of other supplements or medications, or we'll always be a place for them, but it may not be our default setting. Our default setting might. Become first really sound nutrition and and if that's not doing all that it needs to do for you, what are the adjunctive therapies you can use in addition?

Speaker

Mm-hmm.

Deirdre Wilcox

But to have that baseline be again the harvest. And the offering. Of the season, which is how it's meant to be all you know, it's just putting our nature instead of we're writing it or disregarding it, right. But we don't have to learn anything. We just have to get out of our way and remember.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

Yeah, there's no learning here. Yes, it's right. Spring, listen to our gut on it on a number of levels. Yes. And how can you listen to your gut if the gut isn't digesting properly? If you're not eliminating properly? If you're not sorting nutrients, you know. Yeah.

Wynne Leon

Let me. Her. Mm-hmm. Hello.

Vicki Atkinson

And Deirdre, why is it that some of those like epiphanies about, you know, the the power of of the gut, respecting it? Why is it that those things come later in life? I have learned so many lessons about what I know my body really craves. And operates well on. But it it's come in my 6th decade. These are things that probably would have been so helpful for me to know, you know, earlier in my life. But when you you hit hit on those factors that really seem to make you feel. Like optimal Wellness, you really feel good and whole and your your body feels like it's yours and it's functioning well. It's fantastic, but it's sort of like trying to to come up with the individual prescription of what works and. I wish I had figured some of. That out sooner?

Deirdre Wilcox

But he didn't. In in your own defense, Vicky, think about.

Vicki Atkinson

It this way, thank you. Absolve me, my friend. Absolve me, OK? OK, good, good, good.

Deirdre Wilcox

When we're younger, first of all, we know everything, so there's nothing we. Need to learn. Because we got it all figured out.

Vicki Atkinson

There's that. Right, right. Right. Right, right. Yeah, that's true.

Deirdre Wilcox

The further you move into the krone years, the more you realize how little you actually know and that your certainty is more of a. Something to sit with and contemplate as opposed to being certain. Yeah. The thing is, we truly are more able to just let those choices move through our system with less. Impact. So you know, we hear the time I used to be able to go out late and still get up and go to work. No problem. I can't do that anymore. I used to be able to have, you know, wine with my friends during the week. Now it makes me not function as well during the work. Day, you know, so those when we're young, we. Are more resilient in that sense, but also we're just more willing to override it and we think of it as the suffering is kind of a cavalier warrior medal. You know? It's like, yeah, I have a I have a headache and I'm hungover because, yeah, we were out clubbing. So yeah, need to get done today. Yeah. Yeah. Oh my gosh.

Wynne Leon

Wow.

Speaker

Next.

Vicki Atkinson

It's so true, and if it's not bad, it could be people that understand that they're really carb sensitive and you know too when. And I talk about this, you know, the the desire that we have for sweets. But I also know how that's gonna make me. Feel so it's those insidious things. They're sort of around us all the time, not just the going out and clubbing, but just making bad choices, yeah.

Speaker

Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

Day in and day out and you know. Yeah, it's a tough one to learn because we there's the immediate little dopamine hit we get from the pleasure of the chocolate cake and kind of in that moment, you know, and we get the rewards cycle of the brain going, which is a what cycle is it not?

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Wynne Leon

Hmm.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. Yes.

Deirdre Wilcox

Delay that gratification for a more meta gratification which is feeling better, healthy or good isn't as.

Speaker

OK.

Wynne Leon

MHM.

Deirdre Wilcox

Enchanting at the moment, it's like, yeah.

Wynne Leon

Well, say.

Vicki Atkinson

Ohh my gosh, definitely. Oh my gosh. Perfectly put yes.

Wynne Leon

Deidre, you are you. You teach meditation, yoga. You do workshops. How does do you change your? And and you're an artist. Do you change any of your teaching at at this seasonal shift? And do you shift anything?

Deirdre Wilcox

That's a really good question. I do shift the focus and what I teach. Part of that is in response to noticing that the students are feeling different and wanting different things. So. People start to request more stretching. For example, instead of like let's do plank 500 times. You know. Or whatever, because they're without realizing it are are responding to their own DNA wiring. Changes we don't need so many big power moves. And if you think about that, back to our DNA, the power moves are going to require more calories and more energy. And if what we've. Has to be used. Let's not waste it all at the beginning by doing too much strong stuff, we have to pace ourselves so that it matches that pacing of the.

Speaker

Yeah. OK.

Deirdre Wilcox

The the seller full of food so you don't want to do as many power moves because the next batch isn't coming for a while, right? Learn to bring the motor down. We idle a little bit more low and that's smart. That's not just. Ohh, I'm so tired. I don't feel motivated.

Speaker

So we learned.

Deirdre Wilcox

It's smart. Yeah. You know, we haven't been here that long compared to the wiring of the planet and all the animals that were here before.

Wynne Leon

Next.

Deirdre Wilcox

And we have this idea that we need to maintain exactly a certain level 24/7, 365 and it's just not reality based. It's just not biology based and so. I teach. What I would say is we. Overall, move more slowly. The quieter poses we hold for longer periods of time, sometimes in the stronger poses. I leave more time for things that feel like stretching because we're sitting still more. We're inside more so we're getting more compressed. We're not just bursting it in the swimming or stand up, paddle boarding or whatever we're doing. Yeah, we need to disperse the daily accumulation that way. OK. And then I leave more time for either a restorative pose, which specifically is soothing and calming to the nervous system, and more time for shavas another resting period at the end. And I would say the breath practices.

Speaker

Mm-hmm.

Deirdre Wilcox

I tend to have them the the essence of them be more. Stabilizing to the vagus nerve so our big nerve that calibrates that has a lot to do with what part of the response we're in, sympathetic or parasympathetic. And what we want to do is try to balance that out so that it's not that we don't have swings, it's that the swings go more smoothly and we're more resilient in the swings. So the rough practices tend to favor balance, like even inhale and exhales even pauses.

Wynne Leon

Mm-hmm.

Deirdre Wilcox

Some cleansing breath where we valve the throat and let the exhale be longer. Can bring up a little bit of heat in the body, so during the colder days that kind of breath the the valving breath is excellent to do more twisting poses because we're not outside moving as much and twisting supports good digestion and it also releases the little muscles along the spine that get compressed. From being indoors and more sedentary. So yeah, actually it does. I do significantly factor that in. So my interest is always in having. The practice, whether. It's food or yoga or breath or art reflect. What is needed? At this time, and even not just this time, but on this day, because we vary day-to-

day. Mm-hmm. The practice that we need Saturday morning isn't the practice that we need to prepare for the week Sunday night. Those are two different practices.

Speaker

MHM.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Deirdre Wilcox

And we have a tendency to pick a workout and then we wanna do that workout all the time instead of custom, tailored just enough. That it more. Responsive to the current moments needs and you know that's the optimal practices. The no plan, plan, practice. Yeah. Do the thing you need to do right.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. So good, Deirdre, I love how you help us shift. I love these incredibly. Thoughtful and and they just make sense. These practices that help us, Jeff. So thank you so much for your time.

Deirdre Wilcox

Thank you for the opportunity. It's just been lovely to have this time with both of you.

Vicki Atkinson

You. Same. Thank you so much. Very actionable and doable. And so I I love that too. And thank you. Deirdre was a treat.

Deirdre Wilcox

You're welcome.

Wynne Leon

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