

Introduction to cyclical awareness transcription

Hello I am Kate, and welcome to the introduction to Cyclical Awareness class. In this class:

- You're going to find out what cyclical awareness is.
- You're going to find out the gifts of cyclical awareness, which are bountiful.
- You're going to find out how this relates to the menstrual cycle and to perimenopause and the transition that you are in.
- I'm going to offer you a beautiful practise to help balance your cyclical rhythm that you can use in your days when you're feeling stressed or when things are overwhelming or your feeling sensitised.
- You're going to find out why it's perfectly normal for your inner seasons to look totally different to the map and be totally surprising and how that's actually an opportunity for healing and growth.

Essentially, cyclical awareness is the process of expansion and contraction. There's natural process, it's like a pulsation of life, and you find that in the breath. You find that in creativity we have areas of busyness, of production, and then areas of questioning and areas of rest when nothing much seems to happen.

- We see it in the circadian cycle, of course, in our days, and we get active during the day and we rest at night.
- So you breathe in, you expand, and as you exhale, you soften inwards.
- We see this also in the seasons of the menstrual cycle, and this is the gift that I received from Red School where we have the season of Spring after your period coming into the Summer of ovulation, the Autumn of the premenstrual and the Winter of menstruation. And we're going to come back to that a bit later and we have to see the seasons of life as well.

So coming from your first period, it's very Springy into your twenties and thirties. It's more expansive into Summer, then your perimenopause, it's more coming back inwards. Your focus is inwards towards yourself and the Winter of menopause, it's quieter. There's a need for more quiet. So you can see this pulsation just happens all the time, and were we able to follow it, things would be pretty easy. The problem is, of course, the way we live at the moment is that we're not able to easily follow our inner seasons, our need for expansion and contraction. There's a lot of stuff that gets in the way and we're also going to come back to that and have a look at why that happens, on what we can do about it.

This awareness, just noticing the season that you are in allows you to get hold of intuitive, really easy self-care that can cut through judgement and shame and make your life a lot simpler.

- It supports your self-compassion so that your critical voices are much quieter.
- It helps you to be more sustainable, to avoid burnout and to be able to rest when you need to and to give your all when it's time for that too.

- It helps you to identify and appreciate your own unique gifts and talents to be able to see that more clearly.
- It supports your creativity. We'll be talking about that later in the series.
- And perhaps most importantly, it ends the fantasy of separation between us and the earth. This delusion of separation that we have between us and the earth. It helps us to connect with the seasons of the earth and the Earth just as we feel the seasons within ourselves, which helps us to have sustainable activism and love for the planet. Finally, we feel we belong.

Okay, so let's get on to be describing the different seasons, the gifts and the self-care that you can use to support those gifts so you're able to receive all the blessings.

Winter

Starting with Winter and Winter is the time of quiet. It's a time of rest, a time of restoration. Dreaminess a time when you can almost touch your intuition.

- If it's quiet enough, you can almost touch your intuition.
- You become much more close to the spiritual world, whatever that means for you, whether that's the natural world or the world of religion or however you feel your spiritual life.
- So the gifts here are of vision, of receiving, of being able to see and feel and really let go.

And the self-care in order to receive these is really rest, whatever that means to you. So there are many different kinds of rest. I would define rest as whatever makes you feel quiet and soft. So that might be lying down or it might not. And quiet slowing our pace, taking things more slowly and more mindfully and allowing ourselves to receive always a challenge.

Spring

Spring is a time the gifts of Spring are playfulness of new ideas and it's such a tender time. These new ideas can flit away in a moment, but having awareness as we and mindfulness and noticing that quality of noticing as we come into Spring, not jumping off and rushing away in our Springs, we can really allow these ideas to be caught and landed and cherished. Other Spring gifts are:

- adventures and exploration of finding out who we are,
- going out into the world and discovering
- having really fresh, bright eyes.
- And the self-care that we need in Spring in order to take care of these gifts is tenderness and protection and maybe even slowness as well. The temptation is to rush off into the world, but actually being slow, seeing if we can slow ourselves down a little bit in Spring can really allow us to savour all these precious gifts.
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Summer

And then we come into Summer and Summer is a time of maximum expansion.

- So in the height of our relationship with the world, we want to see our spirit manifested in the world.
- And this is a time when you would be pretty good at multitasking, but that's probably a Summer gift.
- And I think really engaging with the world.
- So it's a time when we would be longing for connection.
- We would be busy wanting to change things, wanting to be out there wanting stuff to happen. It's much more busy, busy in the mind, busy in the world,

Autumn

Naturally after Summer comes Autumn. And this crossover into Autumn is a critical time. Summer is very much appreciated by the world as being the 'right way to be' then when Autumn comes in, we change our focus from external to internal towards ourselves. And this deepens more and more through Autumn and Winter. And this can be a bit of a shock, but the gifts of Autumn are

- truth telling
- about editing,
- about knowing who we are,
- stepping into our power
- and the care that we need in our Autumn is really the beginning of that slowing down of nourishing ourselves, of starting to turn inwards *to make ourselves more important than the external world.*

And you can see why this is a challenging time because the world has become so used to us performing and doing everything and now it's time to start prioritising ourselves. And this deepens and deepens as we come into towards Winter. And we have this desire to really run for the hills to move away from the world and to come back into our Winter.

And there you have the seasons and their gifts and there's a graphic underneath this video that you can download so you can pin it on your fridge and have a look at it.

How do the seasons show up?

Let's have a look at a sort of pre-perimenopausal menstrual cycle.

- Winter would be your period, lower energy, longing for quiet, more dreaminess, more intuition.
- Post-menstruation there is Spring: a bit tender, blinking in the light, wobbling out into the world. There's a freshness there and there's new possibilities you've

released into the Winter. Everything has been released through the blood and you are blinking out into the world. What's next? What's new? Those fresh eyes

- Coming into ovulation, there's a real kind of sexiness. There's a sort of engagement with the world. Libido might be high, and if you're sensitive, the colours might be too bright, things might be a bit too intense. It might be a time when it's not very friendly towards your sensitivities and you might want to be a bit more protected possibly.
- And you come into Autumn, the premenstrual, very much coming into your power, into your core, into your centre, into your truth before going into Winter.

Practice

Before we go any further, I'd like to introduce a breath practise that will make this much more concrete for you.

So first, getting comfy. So feeling into your chair, settling into your sit bones if you have back supports, just having a little wriggle to really feel the support around you. Feeling the weight of your arms. Let shoulders soften down a bit just as much as they want to landing in the moment really. And as you start to land, noticing that you are breathing and letting it be just easy and soft. There's no need to change anything. The soft gaze, soft note muscles around your eyes as well, softening your jaw. Hold your jaw just for a moment to remind your jaw that it could be safe to ease just a little bit, just a bit. And then keeping your shoulders soft.

Let your hands float up. I'm going to do it like this so that you can see my hands, but you can keep your hands more open and soft in a way that feels comfortable for you. I'm just doing it up here so you can see me on the screen

With your next in-breath. Start to expand and stretch your hands out. And as the breath releases soften, let your fingers curl in and let your hands come together in your own rhythm and own timing, opening the fingers and stretching your palms as you breathe in, expanding your hands apart. And as you breathe out, releasing that stretch, letting the fingers curl, letting the hands come back together, checking in with the shoulders on the outbreath, letting them soften and breathing in and stretching.

And again, I'm doing this in a particular rhythm because I'm describing it as I'm doing it, but you can just do it in your rhythm with your breath, knowing that whatever your breath is doing is really fine in the moment.

Just opening the hands to expand and inhale and soften the fingers and letting the palms curl everything release and come back together. We have this Spring and Summer expansion and then the softening into Autumn, releasing, letting go, coming inwards in the quietness of Winter, opening into Spring and Summer expansion and quietening, softening, releasing and letting go into Autumn. I'm just going to give you a little time to do this in your own rhythm without my voice. And then bring your hands back and you might want to touch your heart and your belly

And just come back to a more everyday state of being. Just check in first, notice how you feel now, how grounded you are, your bum and where you're sitting, feet on the floor if

they're on the floor. Your state of mind and see what difference this practise has made. And you may have, it's really an inquiry. There isn't a right way to do this. You may feel that by making more of a more exaggerated expansion in a longer softer contraction with your hands, you can the breath rather than response. Or you may have noticed that as your breath shifted and changed, got faster or slower, your hands then caught up with the breath. So there's no right way of doing it. It's a really interesting inquiry.

My intention with offering you this is that you find a handy, embodied way of invoking trust in the expansion and contraction in the seasonal nature of life so that when you are panicking, when you feel that it's over, that it's ended, that it's never going to change. You can call on this when you are waiting to pay at the supermarket or you are driving somewhere or you are on the train or whatever. You can call on this little gesture to reassure and remind yourself and it will also settle the parasympathetic system and reduce cortisol and have lots of hormonal benefits too.

Just a note of attribution, this breath practise, I've adapted from one that I learned from Jo Kemp of Way of Soma in her breath course there she has a jellyfish breathing, which I enjoyed very much and I adapted it to work with the seasons.

The other thing that is likely to be happening in your perimenopause is that the seasons come higgledy-piggledy, that you might have a more of an Autumnal feel but then suddenly feels Springy one morning or having a brief Summer one afternoon. So they may well come out of sequence in your menstrual cycle if you have one, or maybe just through your day you may notice that your circadian rhythm, the daily rhythm, this is Spring in the morning and Summer and midday and Autumn in the afternoon and more Wintery feeling into the evening and night.

How to identify the inner seasons moment to moment

So what we're going to do now is I'm going to help you to identify the seasons that you feel that you are in. Perimenopause is training you for when you go off the map, post menopause. The further you move through the process of menopause through perimenopause and menopause, the more subtle and the more off the map, your inner seasons will show up. So very simply, it's so simple actually to notice it.

If you are feeling really, really tired and on the floor and you want everyone to just piss off, that's Winter.

If you are feeling a bit, oh, a bit fizzy, a little bit fizzy, a little bit curious, maybe a little bit excited, you are starting to, I'm looking over there because I'm looking out at my window. If you're feeling a bit excited about the world and ideas and possibilities start to drop in, that's Spring.

If you are feeling like you can multitask, you're doing three things at the same time, you're really excited, really engaged. Maybe you want to party, maybe you have high libido and you're feeling really like some hot erotic action, or maybe you are pounding the keyboard

and the words are coming out and you're in that, what is it called? You're in the zone. You're in the zone and work just flows. Or maybe you feel like going on a family day out with your kids or your nephews and nieces and everybody comes along and brings a potluck dinner or that kind of really kind of engaged busy feeling. That Summer, my friend Julia Davis of Finchley Yoga says, if you look in the mirror and you think my, I am looking hot today, you're in Summer.

And if you're starting to question, if you are starting to clean your cupboards and throw stuff out, if you are seeing clearly what is wrong with the systems of the world, the systems in your life, the gap classically the gap between what you need and what you've received, that's Autumn. And there are the seasons of your life.

So what might they feel like in your body?

Winter is easy to identify because you'll just want to lie down and be on the floor.

Spring, there's more movement in Spring, there's more movement in your arms and hands in your busier your eyes. You might be more looking up, looking out into the world a bit more airy possibilities coming in. What is that like for you?

Summer full of energy, all action full senses

and Autumn becoming more grounded, becoming more present.

So my question to you is what sort of season do you identify most with right now? What's been going on for you today? What have your thoughts been like? Are you thinking thoughts like: 'I could.....' (insert fun possibility) there's your Spring. Or 'I'm going to do this, I'm going to plan it right now'. There's your Summer self. If you're going, 'What the hell was I thinking?' There's Autumn right there. And if it's a flat no, then you're heading into Winter.

Calling in seasonal self-care.

If you're feeling Springy, you can protect it. You can hold back the world a bit, hold back the judgement, hold back real life and adulting. While there's this enjoyment of possibilities and the awe and the wonder of being alive.

In Summer, your self-care here is to say yes to yourself. It's an affirmation of your worth, regardless of what the world gives you, regardless whether the world affirms or validates you or not, your self-care and Summer is to validate yourself.

And in Autumn you can call in that pacing, that slowing down, that mindfulness, calling in the know, calling in the boundaries here, really knowing where your boundaries are because you know where they are in Autumn and you have the voice to affirm them.

And in Winter your care is to rest in whatever way feels good to you. And just to say again, that may not be lying down and given that in our busy lives rest isn't a given and it isn't always possible, this will very likely mean editing out what is not serving you anymore and taking space where you can, bringing loving care and attention into your Winters instead of rushing and pushing through them.

My seasons don't work like that

So I just want to make a final point before we close this class, because people often say, 'But my seasons don't work like that'. Often post menopause, people say, 'Well, I don't feel like a Second Spring, I'm just not there'.

It's really important to remember that this is this archetypal map that you have the graphic of underneath is a map but it's not the territory. It's like when you're navigating with Google maps, that's not actually what the world looks like. So this expansion in Spring and Summer and the coming back inwards in Autumn and Winter is a soul longing. It's a natural internal rhythm, a soul longing. And where we get interrupted, say in a Spring, the season still turn, but that wound from the Spring will keep calling, will keep knocking on your door. So for many of us, we weren't protected in our Springs, for example, and say in our teenage years, we weren't protected well enough. So this call for protection, this call to be held, to be looked after this call for tenderness will accompany us through our seasons asking us again for care and attention, particularly in the Autumn as we become more sensitive.

The healing medicine of Autumn and Winter

So I'll just say another way to look at the season is Spring and Summer we become more egoic. We become more armoured in order to deal with the world in order to engage. And Autumn and Winter are increasingly sensitive. We get increasingly sensitised in Autumn and Winter. So that's another useful thing for you to know. This sensitization, this permeability that we feel in Autumn would allow the wounds from previous seasons and previous cycles to be felt again and to be healed. They're asking to be healed. They're asking for care here. So when you feel your core wounds returning in your Autumns, in your premenstrual and in your perimenopause, this is not a failure. It's an opportunity to do a bit more work, a bit more care, and a bit more loving.

So I hope you've enjoyed this brief introduction. And next up is the class about the life seasons in perimenopause. So in that we're going to dive deeper into the very particular self-care for perimenopause, and I'm going to share with you the psychological phases of menopause and how to navigate them. And then the third class will be how to track your perimenopause and to chart your perimenopause so that you can map your inner seasons and track your self-care.

An enquiry

I'm going to leave you with a little invitation, maybe I was going to say homework, but actually it's a bit of invitation to feel into what sort of season you are in. Now, we kind of touched on it a bit earlier. So regardless of whether you have a menstrual cycle, where you are in your menstrual cycle or in your life or what the weather is outside, what is your inner

season now? What do you most relate to? Are you more expansive, more wanting to engage in the world or are you more quiet, more sensitised? Just feeling into that, having a little feel, a little think.

And my next invitation is to offer care for you to offer care for that season. How can you care for that season today in yourself? What would be really lovely to receive? How can you be kind to yourself to that season so you can really receive the gifts? And what I suggest you do is make some really small doable commitments to yourself. And often that's qualitative. So it might mean doing something more gently or more slowly or more kindly, or it might be something else entirely. What can you commit to care for yourself?

Closing

I hope you've enjoyed this brief introduction to cyclical awareness. Now, next up you can go and watch or listen or read the introduction to the life seasons and to perimenopause where we're going to be diving deeper into the very particular self-care for perimenopause and also discovering the psychological phases of menopause and what happens after menopause and how to navigate this transition.