



THE FOUR SEASONS OF BELONGING

A natural cycle for bringing more and
more of your wholeness into the world

Belonging isn't something you find. It's a process.

Like every natural process it's cyclical, but not repetitive. In the same way that every spring brings fresh surprises, *every cycle of your belonging invites you to discover more of yourself* and to offer it to the world in new ways.

In my own process of belonging into the world, I've found it helpful to use the four temperate seasons as a guide.

Here's the basic cycle:

- In winter you connect with dormant parts of yourself
- As spring comes you start making those parts known in the world
- Summer brings you the fullness of your belonging in this cycle
- Then in the fall you release this particular incarnation and start again.

These cycles don't follow calendar time. Some can happen in minutes. Others take years, decades, or a lifetime.

And chances are that at any one time, various parts of your life are in totally different seasons.

Over the next few pages I'm gonna invite you deeper into each season. For each one I'll share four key elements to help you connect with where you are in your own cycle of belonging:

- **A poem** to help open the themes of the season
- **An invitation** that the season holds for you
- **A capacity** you have in yourself to meet that invitation
- **And a practice** you can use to exercise this capacity

This is only one model of belonging. And this short guide is a very abridged version of it. But I hope it helps you root deeper into your own process of belonging into the world.

The world is hungry for your wholeness.



Wintering

by James A. Pearson

*Now the leaves have fallen.
The trees have pulled their aliveness
back in from their branches,
down into their fortress trunks
and the dark, subterranean closeness
of their roots.*

*Every year they let go of
exactly what everyone says
is most beautiful about them
to save their own lives.*

*The time will come
when you, too, have to drop
all the ways you've made yourself worth loving,
and finally learn how
to sit quietly
right in the center
of your own small life.*

*Only there can you cry the tears
your life depends on.
Only there can you find
the tiny seed
that holds the whole mystery of you
and cradle it
in the warmth of your body
until the spring.*

Invitation: Self-Connection

With its long, cold darkness, winter invites you to look inside, to get to know the parts of yourself that weren't safe to embody in previous seasons, or simply weren't available.

Capacity: Compassionate Holding

There's a core element of you—a capital-s Self—that can hold every other part of you with a patient and curious compassion. It helps you heal and move deeper into your own wholeness. (If you carry trauma, you may benefit from the help of a therapist to safely access this capacity.)

Practice: Hand of Compassion

Next time you're in emotional pain or tension, notice where you feel it in your body. Place a hand over that area. Feel its warmth against your body. Say to the hurting part of you, "Darling, I can see you're really hurting right now. I'm here for you." Notice whatever happens.

Spring



A New Spring

by James A. Pearson

*Today for the first time
in months, the sun was strong enough
for me to sit outside in the afternoon,
sipping a cold drink, my body remembering
a season when the world wanted me*

*to be alive, to grow. But that was before
all the dying I've done—whole futures fallen,
promises left hanging like fishhooks.
Would spring come again even for me?
And if it did would it find me brave enough
to risk a new seed in the trickster soil?*

*Who knows what shapes this life might take!
But this I do know: the only regret
is not loving the world
in all the painfully honest ways
that only you can love it.*

Invitation: Risk What Is Tender

As seedlings push their first, soft leaves into the light, Spring invites you to risk what is new and alive in you, too. To risk opening the preciousness you connected with in winter into the unruly world.

Capacity: Discerning Courage

If a plant puts out its new leaves too early, winter will take them. Too late and it'll lose its space in the world. You have an intuitive knowing of where, when, and with whom you can risk what's alive in you.

Practice: Speak Your Longing

The first risk of a new spring is admitting your longing to yourself. Once you've done that then—courageously, discerningly—try speaking it to one person you trust, or a small group where you trust it will be held.



Summer

Worker Bees

by James A. Pearson

*I wonder if you can pause
–just for a moment–
the emergency of your life
and step out
into the quiet of the world.
Hear how gently it conveys
the delicate thread of birdsong,
how quickly it can soothe
the rupture of a passing jet.
Feel its vast, smiling invitation
to rest back into
the person you’ve been
all your life. Listen now–
the poppies erupting
out into the sidewalk
are electric with bees.
Look how they bury their bodies
in flower after flower after flower,
drunk on their longing for the world.
What sociopath looked at this
and called it work?*

Invitation: Full Mutuality

In summer the sun gives abundantly to the plants. The plants give abundantly to the animals. The animals give abundantly to the soil. And on and on. You’re invited into this dance of giving and receiving fully.

Capacity: Abundant Giving and Receiving

Trees in the summer unfurl their full array of leaves, drinking in the ample sunlight and turning it into fruits and seeds that feed the world. You, too, can receive the abundance of life. And you can give generously what’s yours to give.

Practice: Generous Gratitude

Consider all that you’ve received—in this season, in a previous season, in your life. Choose one instance you feel particularly grateful for and send your thanks abundantly. A letter. A phone call. A visit. Notice what occurs.



One Good Wind

by James A. Pearson

*It's October so yes, the world
is dying but I always think
I have another month
at least, maybe two,
to marvel in the middle
of fall's kaleidoscope,
walking the fractal trance
of kindergarten yellows and
(somehow!) iridescent pinks.
But then one good wind
comes through off the distant
Pacific and trees that just
yesterday dripped with dazzle
stand skeletized, stripped
of their abundance for the
promiseless months to come.
I guess what I'm trying
to say is, don't save up
your praise. Luxuriate fully
in what you love because
the winds come suddenly
and the winter is long.*

Invitation: Letting Go

The shortening days and dropping temperatures of fall are the world's warning. The abundance of summer is over. And in the coming winter, leaves are a liability. You, too, are invited to release whatever is no longer keeping you alive.

Capacity: Pilgrimage

I've heard that when you walk the Camino de Santiago, the first step is shedding your own name. As you walk you're called, simply, Pilgrim. You have the ability to shed old identity that protects and constricts you.

Practice: Anonymous Walk

Go somewhere nobody knows you, where there are no stakes for you and your life. It could be a forest. Or the Main Street of the next town over. Spend an hour (or a day) walking as if all your identities and commitments have just fallen away. Notice what happens.

*This cycle of
belonging is always
happening beneath
the surface of life,
but often we do our
best to ignore it.*

The poet David Whyte says that most people are years behind the actual frontier of their life. In other words *they're clinging to seasons that have already passed.*

I know I've done that.

I've also tried to skip ahead. To will myself out of winter and into the spring I wished would come.

That's why this model is so helpful for me. It acknowledges that each season has a valuable gift to offer. And that even in the hardest season there's part of me that knows how to meet it.

I think that's true for you, too.

When you engage this process consciously you go deeper in your self-discovery. You offer yourself to the world more wisely and more fully. *And you experience more aliveness and fulfillment in each season of your life.*

But that doesn't mean it's easy. In my experience it often feels frustrating, lonely, and deeply uncertain.

If you could use some accompaniment in your process of belonging into the world, I've spent the past couple years coaching people through their own seasons and cycles.

Not because I understand their lives better than they do. There's no way I could.

But because **sometimes all you need is a good question and a compassionate space to answer it**, and you can overhear yourself say the exact words you needed to hear.

If you're curious how this kind of coaching can help you move deeper into your own belonging, I've set up a very low-risk way for people who download this guide to give it a try. I call it "Coffee Sessions." Click below for details.

I look forward to meeting you in whatever season you find yourself in.

-James