slow & seasonal

A 4 WEEK COURSE DESIGNED TO GUIDE YOU ON YOUR PATH TO A SIMPLER LIFE ALIGNED WITH NATURE

CREATIVE COUNTRYSIDE

www.creativecountryside.com

Module 4

Welcome to Module Four of 'Slow & Seasonal', the four week course to guide you on your path to a simpler life aligned with nature.

In Module One we introduced some of the basic approaches to slow and seasonal living, and in Module Two we explored five concepts in more depth. In Module Three we looked at actionable tips and steps you can take to live more slowly and seasonally. In our fourth and final module, we'll be combining everything you have studied so far to create four seasonal frameworks which you can use as your guide for the next year, and for the future.

Work your way through at your own pace, and if you're short on time, why not listen to the podcast recording of the content? You can then dip in and out of the exercises in this workbook as and when you find a spare few minutes.

This week builds on what you have already learnt, so we advise that you complete Modules One, Two and Three before starting.

In addition to the course material, you may find it helpful to have some large pieces of paper (A3 or bigger) for this week's exercises. Though you can print the prompts directly from the files provided, you may find you quickly run out of space when planning out your ideas.

In this workbook you'll find:

- Section 1: Creating seasonal rhythms.
- Section 2: Creating seasonal frameworks.

A final note from me: we have covered a lot of ground over these past few weeks, and you may feel like there's a still a way to go for you to be able to absorb and interact with the course content; that's completely normal. This course is intended to be an introduction to the key elements of living slowly and seasonally, and your community membership will then sustain you as you continue your journey. The monthly mini books and Facebook group in particular will provide regular support and a space for you to ask any questions, or share any thoughts you might have.

SECTION 1

CREATING SEASONAL RHYTHMS

What is rhythm and why is it important?

In music, rhythm is a regular repeated pattern of either sound or movement. In art, rhythm refers to a cohesive and harmonious flow of colours, textures, pattern. In life, rhythm can be applied in much the same way.

Rhythm refers to a repeated action, thought or intention, repeated at regular intervals to form a wholehearted approach to life.

It is also important to note that your rhythm will undoubtedly look different to mine, and it should do: rhythm in life is dictated by the individual's needs and desires (both for mind and body), so there's no set plan I can tell you to implement that I know will work for you.

Why is rhythm important?

There are lots of articles that argue rhythm is key to bringing up children. Consistent bedtimes, mealtimes, and routines form the basis of a child's daily rhythm, which is said to be important in developing a 'work-rest-play' rhythm that will result in healthy habits later in life (see Susan Weber and Waldorf education more generally for more).

But what about rhythm for adults? How can creating a strong rhythm in our lives benefit us?

In Module 1 we explored the importance of circadian rhythm, and that's a good place to start; even simply going to bed and waking at a similar time each day will have an impact.

Beyond the sleep-wake cycle, forming a 'daily routine' is something often praised in the news and on social media. Routine is anchoring, and sticking with a time-based approach, deciding to eat dinner at a similar time each day, or making time for exercise three days a week can be beneficial for many people. But that's not the kind of rhythm I want to talk about.

The rhythm I'm referring to is more like a set of repeated rituals, rather than making you a slave to the clock.

For instance, I might decide to light a candle every evening with dinner; a small way to create ceremony. I might decide to have my first cup of tea or coffee on the back door step, to immerse myself in the outside world for just a few minutes each day.

Remembering to do these small things that will bring me joy is what I mean by rhythm, and by creating these habits, we can prioritise small steps to living more slowly and seasonally.

SECTION 1

How do we create a rhythm?

To begin, recognise what you already do with consistency in your life. For most people, those things take place at mealtimes, first thing in the morning, and in the evenings. If you work from home, you may find you have more pockets of consistency that you can also explore.

To create your rhythm, choose one element - let's say that's breakfast. Our overall approach is to try and keep things consistent and meaningful.

For consistency, keep the location, time (if you like), and/or ritual the same - you don't need all three, just one element of consistency will do. For our breakfast example, let's imagine that the consistent element is the location: the kitchen table.

To be meaningful, here's where you include a ritual (something that arises from convention or habit). For breakfast, that could be saying a short thank you to the Earth for providing you with your first meal of the day.
It could be lighting a candle.
It could be ending it with a short tea meditation.
It could be reading a special book with your children.
It could be a time for complete silence.
It doesn't matter what your ritual is, just that you have one.

Once you've established a ritual for one area of your life, have a look at introducing more. Remember the aim is to make time for (small) things that bring you joy, and that help you to live the life you want to lead. Think back to Module 1 and your intentions for the year, and the season. These will help you to decide what kind of rituals and rhythms to create.

How does creating a rhythm relate to the seasons?

For me, a rhythm does not have to remain the same throughout the year. If you want to feel more connected to the seasons and the natural world, shifting the rhythm of your life just a little can help.

Each season (in fact each Cross-Quarter Festival - Imbolc, Beltane, Lammas and Samhain) you can look at the rhythms you have created and consider how they might be adapted for the new season ahead.

For example, let's say you decided to light a candle each day for breakfast during the winter months. By the time spring starts to appear, you might feel the sun's light returning and feel ready to switch things up a little. So instead, you could replace that ritual with another: perhaps a couple of minutes spent breathing in the spring air after you've finished eating, or maybe you'd simply like to eat breakfast a little earlier.

Being aware of the seasonal changes enables you to reconnect with your daily life and rhythm, something that is so easy to forget about when life is hectic and busy.

A final point about creating seasonal rhythms: remember they are not binding, and of course the point in them being tailored to you is that you can change them whenever you like. I'm sure you'll also find (as I do) that you won't always follow your rhythm. Life will get in the way, and that's ok.

Having it to return back to as an anchor is what's important, no matter how many times you drift away from your rhythm.

SECTION 1: EXERCISES

One: Starting to Develop Your Seasonal Rhythm

1. Pick something in your life that you already do with consistency, that you'd like to adapt and include in your seasonal rhythm (e.g. a mealtime).

.....

.....

2. What about it is (or could be) consistent? Location? Time? Or would you like the ritual to be the consistent element?

.....

.....

3. How could you make this moment meaningful? List as many ideas as you like.

.....

.....

4. Which of the above is most appropriate for the current season?

.....

.....

5. Complete the following:

Season: .....

+

Action: .....

+

Consistent element: .....

+

Making it meaningful: .....

=

Your first step to creating your seasonal rhythm!

6. How might you adapt the above for other seasons?

.....

.....

.....

If you're struggling, see some examples of my summer rhythm in Section 2.

Two: Creating Your Own Seasonal Rhythm

Create two more elements of your rhythm for this season, or the season ahead. You can, of course, repeat this process as many times as you like.

Season: .....

+

Action: .....

+

Consistent element: .....

+

Making it meaningful: .....

=

Your second step to creating your seasonal rhythm!

How might you adapt the above for other seasons?

.....

.....

.....

Season: .....

+

Action: .....

+

Consistent element: .....

+

Making it meaningful: .....

=

Your third step to creating your seasonal rhythm!

How might you adapt the above for other seasons?

.....

.....

.....

SECTION 2

CREATING A SEASONAL FRAMEWORK

What is a seasonal framework?

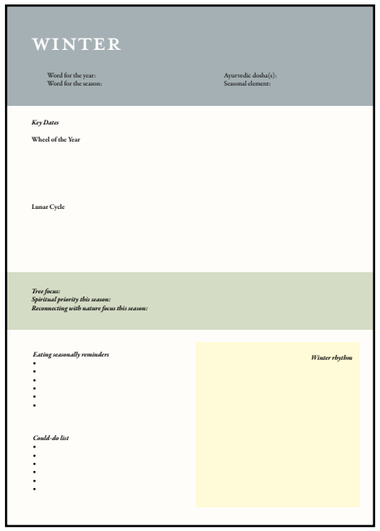
I've never shied away from the fact that I believe living slowly and seasonally in our modern age requires organisation, and some degree of discipline. We all have responsibilities that consume most of our time, and unless we make a conscious effort, it's all too easy to end up with no time left in the day (and even then, to actually remember what we wanted to do with that time in the first place is often a struggle).

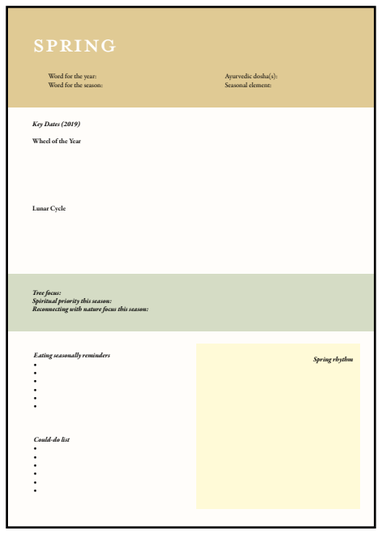
So if you're serious about choosing to live in alignment with the natural world, and at a pace that suits you, not just the world we live in, you need a plan. Here's where a seasonal framework comes in.

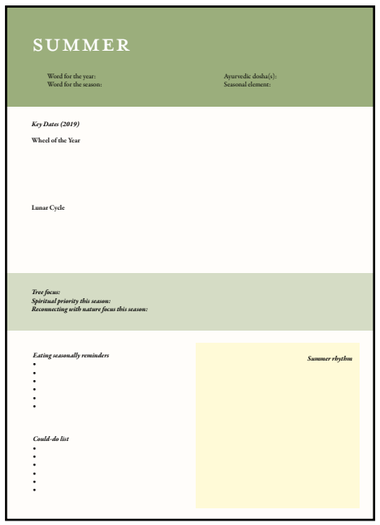
These frameworks aim to act as a planning tool, and as a kind of calendar, in order to make living slowly and seasonally as simple as possible. The from I've chosen for them is a one-page (printable) A3 document, one for each of the four seasons.

The frameworks are structured so that some elements are reminders that will be applicable to all (key dates, for instance), and some are tailored to your individual needs and desires (seasonal rhythms, for example).

In addition to the workbook, this week you should also have access to five extra PDF documents: A3 templates for spring, summer, autumn and winter, and an example of my own framework for summer (all of which could be downsized and printed on a home printer, or which you could print A3 size through a specialist printing company - don't forget you could also just use these templates as guidance, and you can create your own design by hand, or on the computer).







Your exercise for Section 2 is to fill in these templates, using all the knowledge and ideas you have explored so far in the course. Begin with the season you are either currently in, or the one about to start.

Remember you can use my summer framework as an example, but don't feel limited - you can add or remove elements of the framework as you see fit.

Before committing to creating your frameworks, you may wish to write down / condense all the ideas you have for what could be included on a large sheet of paper.

What happens once I've created my frameworks?

Now comes the hard part. Habits take time to formulate, so don't expect your rhythm to instantly begin and work successfully on day one (though it may do, of course!). Pin it to your wall, your fridge, the back of your door... put it somewhere you'll see regularly.

Try to check back in with your framework every time you set intentions, or feel like you're drifting away from the life you'd like to lead.

That could mean looking back over it at each new moon, or each marker on the Wheel of the Year. Or it could just be a case of glancing at it when you're thinking about what to do this weekend, or where to go on holiday.

My framework acts as a basis for my values and approach to both life and work. I hope you will find yours just as useful.

WHAT TO TAKE AWAY FROM MODULE 4

SECTION 1

Creating a rhythm inspired by the seasons is a way to align your everyday with the natural world. Remember there are two key parts to creating rhythm in your life (and work):

1. include at least one element of consistency
2. make it meaningful.

SECTION 2

Creating a seasonal framework is the final step in our journey to living a life aligned with the seasons and at a pace that works for you.

These frameworks should act as a reminder and a guide through each segment of the year. Remember that though some elements may be true for all, customising your framework to suit your own life is essential if it is to make a difference for you.

HELPFUL RESOURCES & MOVING FORWARDS

I hope that this course has led you a little further on your journey to living more slowly and seasonally. The content and exercises are intended to provide a grounding in key concepts, and guide you to think about what may be possible (and what kind of life it is that you want to lead).

The following resources may be helpful for this module, but also more generally, and for the future too:

Living and working in seasons from Jen Carrington
How does your circadian clock keep track of the seasons?
Natural living e-course from Becky Cole
Quiet Matters podcast from Ochre & Flax
The Things You Can See Only When You Slow Down by Haemin Sunim
Destination Simple by Brooke McAlary
Gather by Gill Meller

If you have any questions whatsoever about this or any week's content, please feel free to email Eleanor - contact@creativecountryside.com

You can also ask questions or share your thoughts and progress in the community Facebook group.

CREATIVE COUNTRYSIDE
www.creativecountryside.com