

FALL Into Good Intentions ("Autumn's" Up!)

By SJV

As someone that grew up in a country where there were two seasons year-round, wet and dry, it took me a few years to get used to and appreciate the Fall season in New England. Initially, I dreaded that it meant that winter was right around the corner, because anything below 45 °F, which had been the lowest temperature I had previously ever experienced, just did not warrant leaving the house! But over the years, I have come to appreciate the comfortable temperatures that Fall brings and the beautiful warm colors of New England foliage. Even our Fall sunrises and sunsets become vibrantly prettier because the sun is at a different angle and we can experience two golden hours per day. And yes, winter is coming, but if this year has taught us anything, it is to take one day at a time and fully enjoy the day to day rather than focus too much on tomorrow. In other words, do not start shoveling the snow that is not here, before you sweep away the leaves that need to be swept! 😊

With that said, it is still important to have a plan for when the snow arrives. Correspondingly, having goals your health and wellbeing, and not wait until/if you get sick. I read a meme that has been circulating around recently that said, "if you do not make time for your wellness, you will be forced to make time for your illness". And there are many of us that are painfully aware of how true that statement is. But at the same time, some people *do* make time for their wellness and they *still* get ill. Nevertheless, we can better our chances by taking care of ourselves before we get ill and continue to protect ourselves during this unprecedented time.

Fall season is actually a good time to reset and introduce new goals for ourselves. Think of the fall as your "second chance January," advises Erin Clifford, a wellness coach based in Chicago. Did you know that a lot of people gain weight during the summer? And it is likely that this summer brought on more pounds because of our valid hesitation to go back to gyms, or even to just be out and about. Plus, stress eating is certainly a likely culprit as the strain and anxiety that most people are feeling these days is off the charts! Starting new aspirations now that you can potentially accomplish by the end of the year is a great mode of momentum to carry you over into the new year. "For instance, if you want to lose weight, be specific about how much you want to lose and what diet and exercise plan you are going to utilize to accomplish your goal. The change of season is always the perfect time to make changes happen in your life." (<https://health.usnews.com/wellness/slideshows/tips-for-a-healthy-fall>).



Did you know that the star player of the Fall Season has nothing to do with Football but rather the bright orange relative of winter squash? Yes pumpkin, you got it! 😊 Treating yourself to the bounties of Fall is a great goal to make for yourself and your body. This does not mean only indulging in sugar loaded pumpkin spice lattes or carving out these guys for a craft project, although both of those are definite treats! Why not also eat the nutritiously dense flesh of the pumpkins you buy and reap the benefits of its loaded vitamins A & C? Even its tasty seeds, called pepitas, are rich in phytosterols and can also be a wonderful topping for your salads. Other Fall season rewards include beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, eggplant, kale, and squash. And let us not forget the wonderful fruits of Fall like apples, pears, cranberries, and persimmons that all provide other health benefits.



"Cranberries are packed with unique polyphenols called proanthocyanidins – or PACs," says Jenna Bell, a registered dietitian based in St. Petersburg, Florida. PACs help protect your urinary tract; research suggests that cranberry juice, for example, helps prevent recurring urinary tract infections. Cranberries are also good for your heart and a solid source of antioxidants, which play a role in preventing chronic diseases by protecting healthy cells from damage caused by free radicals, which are associated with diseases like cancer. (<https://health.usnews.com/wellness/slideshows/tips-for-a-healthy-fall>).

In addition to all the beautiful superfoods that you will be eating, it is important to also hydrate with lots of water throughout the day which is also beneficial to your immune system, even though you don't feel as hot or thirsty. Also enjoy the change of scenery and cooler air, by getting more time safely outdoors and closer to nature (just be sure to check yourself for any ticks as you are crunching the leaves with your feet or sweeping them into piles). Add in your exercise or set a new fitness goal for the rest of the year. According to Harvard Medical School, your goal should be to get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise each week (which is a little more than 20 minutes per day). Moderate exercise is done at a level where you can talk, but not sing. "A lot of people think moderate exercise is a casual walk to the garden, but it's more like walking up a large hill," says Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, an obesity specialist and assistant professor of medicine and pediatrics at Harvard Medical School. While any movement is

better than nothing, work toward achieving a more vigorous level of exercise when you can. (https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/stop-counting-calories?utm_source=delivra&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=WR20201002-6WeekPlan&utm_id=2453970&dlv-emuid=54336687-ce4b-4bd0-87a7-8a10e09b3c9a&dlv-mlid=2453970). Plus, of course you want to soak up as much natural Vitamin D as you can!



And lastly, as you are adjusting to new schedules, whether it is work, school (home or hybrid), and other errands, be sure to take some quiet moments for yourself during the day. Set your intentions and take some deep breaths. Do not start shoveling the snow that is not here yet, sweep away the leaves that need to be swept, and be present. You are valuable, you are loved, and you are beautiful.