

[A Year of Living Shamanically](#)

Part 3: The Spring Equinox - new beginnings

What are the equinoxes?

The word 'equinox' means 'equal night'. The main reason the seasons happen is because the earth is tipped at an angle in its relation to the sun. So, in the north for example, winter is when the top half of the planet (the northern hemisphere) is tipped furthest away from the sun. Summer is when the northern hemisphere is tipped closest to the sun. The exact day on which these two events happen, the longest night and the longest day, are known as the winter and summer solstices respectively. The spring and the autumn equinoxes represent the midpoints where day and night are equal. The spring equinox (or 'vernal' equinox, from the Latin for 'bloom') is on or around March 20th/21st in the northern hemisphere (September in the southern hemisphere).

Do the solstices and equinoxes represent the start of a season, or its midpoint?

It depends how you look at it. Astronomically, the seasons are said to start at the equinoxes and solstices. So the spring equinox is the first day of spring, the winter solstice the first day of winter, and so on. However, traditionally (in the Pagan and nature traditions) the first day of spring would be Imbolc – February the 1st, because it is when the very first shoots of spring can be seen. In this way of looking at things, the solstices and equinoxes represent the midpoints of a season. Which is why the winter equinox (yuletide) is often referred to as 'mid-winter', and the summer solstice as 'mid-summer'. So the spring equinox is mid-spring. What it signifies is that spring is definitely here.

So what does spring represent?

Whereas Imbolc signals tentative new beginnings, and so a time to start planning but not a time to act, the spring equinox signals a time to really start putting plans into action. It is the tipping point when the night finally gives way to the day, after which the days become progressively longer than the nights. It is a time of new beginnings; of renewal; of celebrating new life; a time to start planting one's seeds, both literal and metaphorical; of 'laying the eggs' conceived at Imbolc.



In the previous article I outlined a process for making plans and setting goals at Imbolc. If you did this process, now is an excellent time to review your goals and take stock on how you are doing (don't be too surprised if in doing this you find you didn't do too well - Imbolc can be a time of low energy and false starts, so you can be kind to yourself!). If you didn't do the process then, it's not too late to do it now if you want to. The medicine wheel is a circle, and we can enter it at any point. What is relevant here in terms of spending a year 'living shamanically' is to make plans and act in ways that are appropriate to, and in harmony with, the time of year. So whereas at Imbolc our six-week short-term goals need to be taken into account the low energy and introspection of that time of the year, now the energy is rising and we can start to move more into action. The actions of this time of year, according to the medicine wheel, being about new starts and fresh beginnings.

So some general ideas...

- If you are following the goal-setting process, then now is the time to make your (next) six week plan, which will take you up to Beltane on May 1st. What do you now need to get on with next?
- Obviously, this is an excellent time of year to do a 'spring clean' – it is no coincidence that is what we call it! Chuck old stuff out – it always amazing how therapeutic that can feel

and how much psychological energy that can free up. Sort through your wardrobe and books. Give the house a really good clean. Wash the windows to let extra light in. Do some decorating (the Easter bank holiday is the busiest time of year in D.I.Y. shops!). Buy a bunch of daffodils, or go gather some catkins. Freshen things up. Go through your house room by room and cleanse it energetically – you can use space-clearing sprays, smudge sticks and/or a rattle to do this.

- It's also of course a great time to do a spring clean health-wise. Do a detox of some kind. Clean up your diet. Stop smoking or drinking too much alcohol. Usually people try to do new year resolutions in January. In terms of the medicine wheel, January is an awful time to try and do this (so well done if you succeeded in trying to do it then!). Use some detox herbs. Again it's no coincidence that the detoxing herbs such as dandelion and burdock roots are known as 'spring bitters'.
- Get outside and get as much sunlight as you can. We need it after the winter. Pay attention to all the plants bursting into life around you. When is the last time you actually stopped and took the time to look close up at a plant bud? - they are amazing!
- Do something fun. It's a time of celebration, after the heaviness of winter.



In more specifically shamanic terms...

- You could deliberately do shamanic journeys to seek out some spring-cleaning healing. For example, do a journey to deliberately seek out a dismemberment. This is a journey (usually in the upper or lower worlds) to be eaten by an animal helper, and then regurgitated or defecated out in in new form. It is a powerful cleansing and transformative process. And if you don't know how to journey, now would be a great time to learn ('[Shamanic Journeying: A Beginner's Guide](#)' by Sandra Ingerman is a good place to start – the book comes with a CD of shamanic journeying to journey to).
- Burial and rebirth journeys, with the emphasis on the rebirth, are also especially powerful to do at this time of year (this is, of course, what the Easter story of the resurrection is really all about).



- Spring is also the time of infancy and childhood, in the medicine wheel. So it is also a really good time to do soul retrievals for soul parts that we lost when young, and a great time to reconnect with our inner child, and remember how to play again.
- The spring equinox is the time of the east. You can journey to meet the spirit of the east. They will appear to in a form that makes sense to you (the risen Jesus, the playful pre-Christian European goddess Eoste (aka Ostara), or an animal spirit, or something else entirely). Whatever the form they take, they embody the energy of this time of year, and can be an immensely powerful ally to work with now. They may have a message for you, or some healing to give you, or you could ask them for help and support.
- It is also the time of the air element, and so a great time to work with bird energies. You could practice working with feathers. Or you could deliberately set out to do some journeys to meet different bird helpers, and get to know their different gifts, and read up about them too. Other animals to journey to meet would be Rabbit (sacred to Eostre) and Hare.

In the next article, I'll look at Beltane, what it means and how we can work with it shamanically.

Blessings to you.

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