

ROBERT MULHALL

Finding balance between the changing seasons

Feb 27, 2024



Robert Mulhall



Snowdrops and other bulbs peeking through the soil in March 2018. While late winter may not be a popular time in the Northeast, nature does provide us with hints of better days to come, notes columnist Robert Mulhall.

STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

“I spent a lot of years trying to outrun or outsmart vulnerability by making things certain and definite, black and white, good and bad. My inability to lean into the discomfort of vulnerability limited the fullness of those important experiences that are wrought with uncertainty: Love, belonging, trust, joy, and creativity to name a few.”

— Brene Brown

We are approaching one of those times in the year where we stand between the seasons. We feel the sharpness of the cold biting winds and the warmer embrace of the sun, often at the same time.

It is a time where things feel a little unpredictable, we wonder if Spring is finally here, often to wake up to a snow flurry or a temperature that confirms “not yet.” This can be unsettling for our minds and our nervous systems, but if we can work with this dynamic, rather than resist it or try to escape it, we can find a more easeful way of being.

For many in the Northeast, it is not your favorite time of year. We are feeling tired of the long winter months and no matter what Punxsutawney Phil says, we are not filled with much hope. I often ask myself, what is the gift of this time? What might nature be trying to show me? What might nature be trying to teach me?

When I look at nature, I see a few things happening. There is still an incredible amount of stillness and quiet in the forest and on the lakes, but when I get close and pay attention, I started to notice that some birds have already returned.

I notice that some snowdrops have decided it's time to rise up. These first bloomers represent new beginnings and the ability to overcome challenges. So, as I sit and attune to nature, she tells me that this time is about holding onto the quiet and stillness of winter whilst making space for what wants to emerge, slowly, without the need for a huge effort on our part. More of a gentle “yes,” a willingness to start to look to the future and imagine, a willingness to open to possibilities.

So, this is an invitation to sync with the two energies that nature is holding right now, the energy of rest and quiet and the energy of softly saying yes and allowing new ventures to unfurl as the snowdrops do.

"Adopt the pace of nature. Her secret is patience."

–Ralph Waldo Emerson

At Kripalu, we have started to step into the new possibilities, some of the goals that we have for the year are now finding more traction, slowly but steadily. The important thing for us is to move mindfully, to not now rush forward but to keep listening and allowing space for rest as we feel energized by the slow turn of the seasons.

Here are a few suggestions that you might find supportive over the coming weeks, until we feel that full calling from Spring:

- Balance: Allow yourself to feel the different energies of winter and spring. When you feel an imbalance (too much food, too much sleep, too much activity, too much socializing, too much solitude), give yourself a small dose of the medicine you need to re-find balance. Imagine that you are gently, and without judgement, letting yourself play a game of balancing your scales. This is an incredible practice in self-kindness.
- Imagine: What is wanting to come into your life? What is the dream you have for yourself this year and beyond? What are you willing to say yes to, even if there is fear, to help you start to bloom more fully?
- Say yes and say no: Play with saying yes to a few opportunities, invitations, meeting your own needs. Play with saying no, allowing space of rest and quiet. Keep asking yourself “Is this what I need right now?”

I look forward to next month when we can explore stepping more fully into the energy of spring and letting winter fall away.

Robert Mulhall is the CEO and president of Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health in Stockbridge.