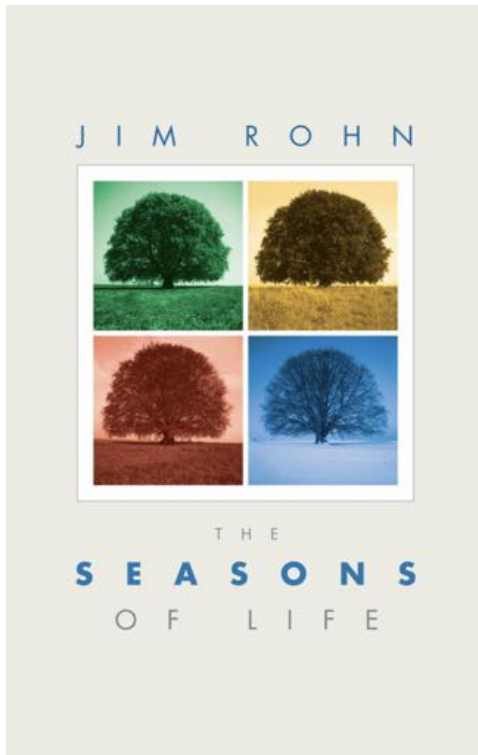


The Seasons of Life, by Jim Rohn

“The only limitation placed on our abilities is our inability to easily recognize our unlimited nature.”



Summary: the first book written by the timeless, legendary [Jim Rohn](#).

When Jim Rohn died in 2009, Tony Robbins gave his eulogy—a testament to the amazing legacy that all started with this book.

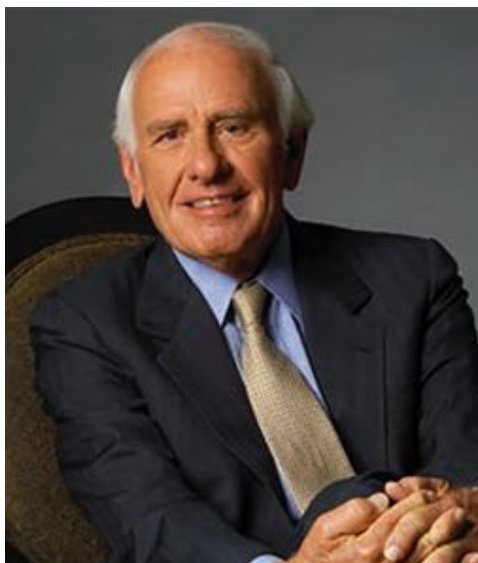
The Seasons of Life is a mere 123 pages, sprinkled with simple drawings of nature. It's a quick read—I read it on my lunch break.

The key message in this book is that life is cyclical, and always changes, just like the seasons:

- **Spring:** a time of opportunity and activity: new life, planting, early growth, pruning
- **Summer:** continued growth, defending your harvest; “the weeds try to take the garden”
- **Fall:** harvest time, reap what you sow
- **Winter:** hardship; gratitude + introspection

Start by taking ownership. People that blame and complain lead mediocre lives. Don't let that be you.

“We tend to accumulate and cling to ideas that limit our progress.”



Jim Rohn (1930-2009)

Author bio: when Jim Rohn passed away in 2009, he left an estate of over [\\$500 million dollars](#). But it was never about the money—it was about changing people's lives, or what he called *personal development*.

Born to an Idaho farming family in the mid-1900s, Jim was ingrained with a work ethic that served him well throughout his life. At 25, he met his mentor Earl Shoaff. And over the next six years he made his first fortune, yet didn't get into speaking until he moved to Beverly Hills when a friend at the Rotary Club asked him to tell his success story, which Rohn titled “*Idaho Farm Boy Makes It to Beverly Hills*.”

Jim devoted his life spreading a message that touched the lives of over 5 million people over 46 years. He gave over 6,000 seminars and stayed hours afterward with every last guest who wanted a picture.

He was the author of 25 books, audio, and DVD programs. Jim's philosophies and influence continue to have worldwide impact.

2-5-10-20: a distillation exercise, i.e. clarity via constraint.

This book in 2 words: Take ownership.

This book in 5 words: Take ownership—you are unlimited.

This book in 10 words: Take ownership—you are unlimited. Shun negativity. Adversity strengthens us.

This book in 20 words: Take ownership—you are unlimited. Shun negativity. Adversity strengthens us. Do hard things; exist to achieve. All circumstances are temporary.

This wonderful little book can be read on your lunch break. It is divided into nine chapters:

- | | |
|---|---|
| I. The Cycles and Seasons of Life | V. The Spring |
| II. The Effect of Environment on Circumstance | VI. The Summer |
| III. The Value of Attitude | VII. The Fall |
| IV. The Constant, Predictable Pattern of Change | VIII. The Winter |
| | IX. Defeat—The Best Beginning |

I: The Cycles and Seasons of Life

For most, we remain forever in one of two categories—either poor, seeking to become wealthy, or wealthy seeking always to rediscover the happiness we had while we were poor.

Jim argues there is no secret or universal answer to success. A fulfilling life is uniquely defined for each individual person, just as we are all individually unique. The purpose of this book, therefore, is not to proffer success formulas, but rather *“awaken within each of us the storehouse of inspiration and answers that lie sleeping where they have been since being placed there at birth.”*

II. The Effect of Environment on Circumstance

This chapter reminded me of a quote I heard on a mental health podcast: “Depression is living in the past; anxiety is living in the future.” I can’t recall the source, but it dovetails nicely with a key learning from this chapter: **Don’t let the past hold your present (or future) hostage.**

Unclench the fist of blame—it is the insecure ego trying to save face. Take ownership of your circumstance, and imagine your past challenges and failures as a **wise teacher**. This teacher will teach—if the student will listen—how to wisely invest the past into the future.

Negativity is a poison that kills slowly. Learn to identify it, then **ruthlessly cull it** from your social, professional and personal life.

There is little difference between one who has given up his life and one who has given up his hope.

As you seek a better life and begin to climb above the crowd of mediocrity, **expect haters**. Anticipate their criticism, jealousy and jeers. It is human nature, and it is as old as time. Try to **assume best intent**: the naysayers just haven't had their revelation yet.

We tend to accumulate and cling to ideas that limit our progress.

The weeds will try to take the garden: sure as the sun rises and sets, the weeds will try to take your garden. The weeds come in many forms: negative people, customs, harmful attitudes, unhealthy habits, dubious opinions, and subversive philosophies of life. **Your job:** rip 'em out.



The improvement of our personal circumstances means that we must learn to do what the failures are simply not willing to do.

That's the hard part—doing the uncomfortable thing:

- Distancing yourself from cynical, complaining people.
 - Yes, this includes family.
- Getting up at 4:30am to exercise before the workday.
- Disappointing your happy hour crew so you can stay home and work on your finances.
- Politely declining the dessert menu, i.e. *It ~~doesn't~~ does hurt to look.*
- Deciding to read a book instead of watching a 24th forgettable Netflix show.
- Asking your partner about the deeper emotions beyond "How was your day?"
- Deleting addictive social media apps from your phone to see how you feel.

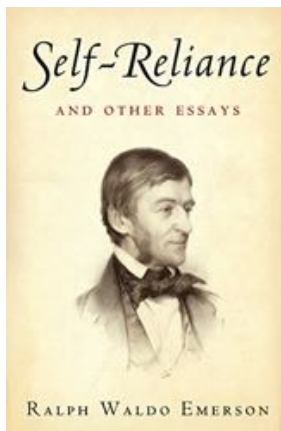
- Missing out of a fun weekend so you can stay home and set some ambitious goals.
- Assuming best intent, always.
- Diverting a conversation away from gossip or criticism.
- Cancelling a meeting you know is a waste of time.
- Being ruthlessly honest instead of ruinously courteous.
- Planning a family outing instead of watching the “big game.”

All of these things are hard to start, and even harder to maintain. But this is the price of having a uniquely clean, beautiful garden. Get pruning! **Success is both doing and undoing.**

Try, plan, dream, explore, achieve, love, give, share.

III. The Value of Attitude

As I read and ponder and speculate upon people, their deeds and their destiny, I become more deeply convinced that it is our natural destiny to grow, to succeed, to prosper, and to find happiness while we're here.



The chapter has strong, somewhat controversial views, that ring of [Emerson's Self-Reliance](#).

Rohn argues that *“poverty, except in extreme exceptions, represses individuals. . . who **elected not to use their individual talents**. They chose, rather, to allow those who have discovered and used their talents, to take care of them.”*

That's enough to infuriate even the most moderate of liberals.

Jim, who quotes the Bible freely in almost every seminar, proceeds to challenge one of the trappings of Catholicism: *“Contrary to the teaching of some religions, **wealth is not evil—poverty is evil**. . . I am aware that it is said of those with divine authority that ‘the meek shall inherit the earth,’ but where does it also say that in order to be ‘meek’ you must also be poor?”*

Definition of *meek*, for reference: “quiet, gentle, and easily imposed on; submissive.” [Oxford Languages]

In summary, Rohn argues the fundamental causes of poverty are: laziness, lack of effort, and quitting.

The only limitation placed on our abilities is our inability to easily recognize our unlimited nature.

Failure, interestingly, does not require effort to occur. All failure requires is a **slowly deteriorating attitude** about our present, our future, and about ourselves.

It's ironic that one of the few things in this life that we have total control over is our own attitudes, and yet most of us live our entire life behaving as though we had no control whatsoever.

Attitude determines choice, and choice determines results.

IV. The Constant, Predictable Pattern of Change

As you may have guessed, this book highlights seasonal change as a powerful metaphor for the rollercoaster of life—the patterns:



Spring: new life, planting, early growth, purging, change

Summer: continued growth, defending your harvest.

Fall: harvest time, reap what you sow.

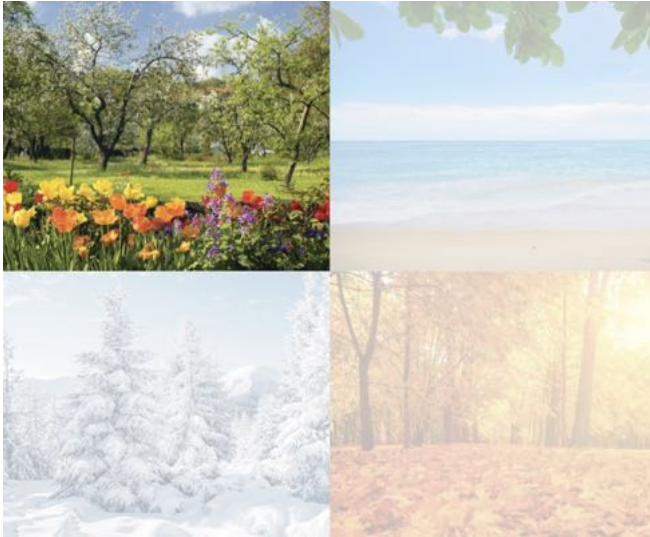
Winter: depends how your harvest did - could be celebratory, could be painful; gratitude + introspection.

For all of us, the only constant factor in life is our feelings and attitudes toward life. To succeed, we must anticipate, react, and adapt to the seasons of life. Let them change us!

Yet each generation feels as though they're experiencing whatever it is for the first time. They fail to appreciate life's cycle, life's rhythms, which have been ebbing and flowing for thousands of years.

How we pontificate: *"I don't want to turn out like my parents,"* just as the last 60 generations have said the same of theirs.

V. The Spring: the time to take advantage of opportunity, friendship, love, ideas



Springtime is **activity** and **opportunity**. Don't fall into the trap of pondering past failures or success—get busy with accumulating knowledge, making commitments, and amplifying effort.

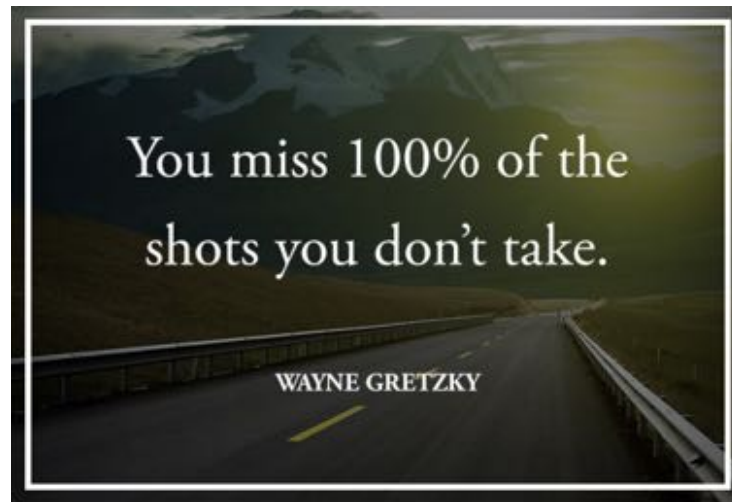
The biggest risk during spring is doing nothing.

As sure as the rising sun, life will bring its challenges. But if you plant massively and intelligently enough, your harvest will endure.

“Fooling or lying to ourselves is the height of ignorance.”

Rohn invokes the timeless passage “Faith without works is dead” [James 2:26] as encouragement to get to work in the spring. Faith alone will not feed your family in the winter—get to work. Exert effort.

This chapter also reminded me of the famous Wayne Gretzky quote. Bias towards action.



The spring is the time to take shots. It's better to try and fail, then not try at all. Seize the moments as you encounter them. Shape them into your better future. **Today's procrastination will surely be tomorrow's regret.**

Rohn also alludes to a mindset—an awareness—that's derivative from spring: the ability to see the shoots of opportunity *in all seasons*. True, you must plant in the spring, but we can embrace the spring mindset **throughout all seasons of life** to help us identify new opportunities:

- Joining a running group
- Reaching out to someone you admire

- Getting curious about a friend's business venture
- Taking a class of real estate
- Being present in your day-to-day and noticing something you haven't before

VI. The Summer: a time to protect and nurture



“Without adversity achievement could not exist.”

Rohn urges us to appreciate that “the constant, unrelenting pull of life is downward, giving cause for disappointment, despair, and discouragement.”

The weeds will try to take the garden. In the summer, you protect your garden from bugs, weeds, intruders.

All good will be attacked. It's nature's way of qualifying those who are worthy and those who are not.

The weeds of life are designed to turn confidence into doubt, trust into suspicion, patience into impatience, and effort into procrastination, worry, and eventual defeat.

Be grateful for adversity, for it forces the human spirit to grow, for sure, the human character is formed not in the absence of difficulty but in our response to it.

Plan, plan, plan.

If you wish to change your circumstances, concentrate a good share of your idle hours upon self-development by planning more, reading more, and investing more.

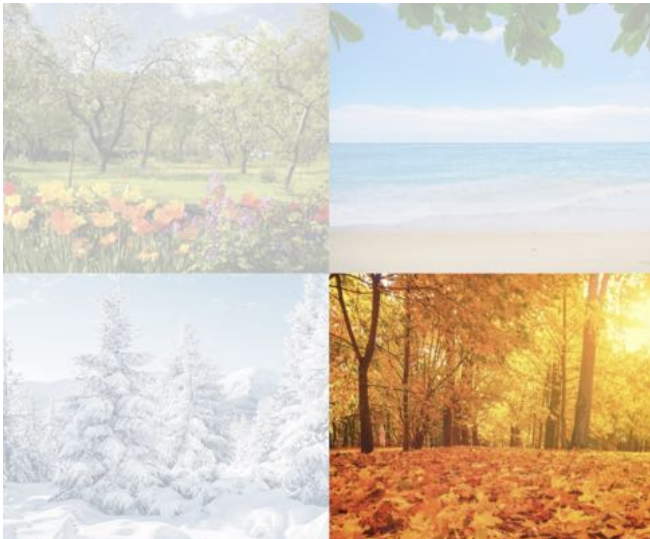
You must learn to work harder on your own personal growth than anything else.

In the metaphor of “defending and nurturing our crops” during the summer, most of the defensive warfare is going on in our minds.

VII. The Fall: a time for harvesting the fruits of our springtime labor.

Rohn opens with a quote from [Lin Yutang](#), the prolific Chinese writer, linguist, and intellectual:

"I like the spring, but it is too young. I like the summer, but it is too proud. So I like best of all autumn, because its leaves are a little yellow, its tone mellower, its colors richer, and it is all tinged a little with sorrow. . . its golden riches speak not of the innocence of spring, nor of the power of summer, but of the mellowness and kingly wisdom of approaching age. It knows the limitations of life and is content."



Fall depends on your actions during spring & summer:

- For those that planted and defended: feelings of triumph and celebration
- For those that procrastinated and made excuses: feelings of anxiety and regret

"The fall tells us if we have really done that which is required, or if we have fooled ourselves through the temporary anesthetic of conversation and pretense. . . of telling ourselves we've worked when we haven't."

Signs that you didn't plant or work hard enough in the spring:

- You're bank account is low or empty
- You're making excuses for or complaining about your current circumstances
- You're heavier/less healthy than you were 9-12 months ago
- You're still trudging through the work day with the same skills you had last year
- You don't remember the last book you read
- Your friendships feel distant and disconnected
- You stay up too late watching Netflix instead of working on yourself
- Your love life is stagnant

Meanwhile, when you have achieved a bountiful autumn harvest, you can expect those who do not possess to scorn the possessor. **Expect judgment, resentment and jealousy**—it is basic human

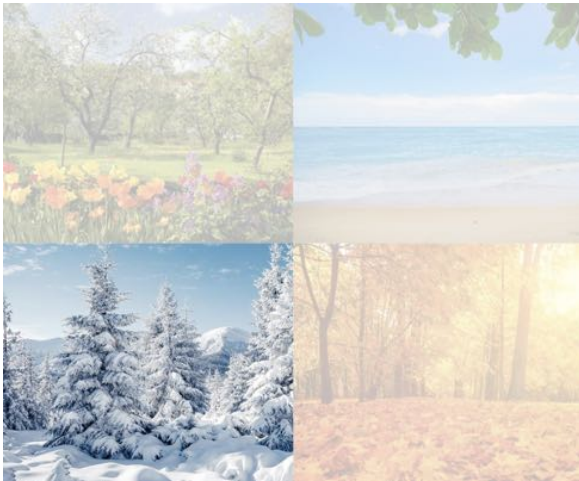
nature. The critics are on the sidelines with only their comments to protect their fragile egos. The critics are not aware of the effort, sacrifice, persistence and risks you embraced to yield your crop.

Forty hours a week spent in the fields of opportunity may not be enough, especially if it is spent in the wrong field.

The above quote made me think about fishing. It's worth asking: are you fishing in the right pond? Similar to tilling an infertile field, fishing in a fishless lake is a fool's errand.

And while there is great difficulty involved in changing one field for another more fertile field, that difficulty is insignificant compared to the ultimate difficulty that comes from not changing.

VIII. The Winter: hard times.



When the weather turns, the bear market growls, and hardship hammers you. Winter is coming.

"The arrival of winter finds us in one of two categories: either we are prepared, or we are unprepared."

Winter is unpredictable, yet rest assured it will come. **What is one thing you could do to prepare for hard times?** Does the below list apply to you? What's missing?

What are things you can do to prepare for winter?

- Balance your investment portfolio
- If you don't have an investment portfolio, [read this](#)
- Buy life insurance; talk to an estate planner
- Create a plan if the worst were to happen
- Download Mint and create a budget
- Sign up for a 401k + matching
- Write your parents eulogy while they're still alive
- Open a rainy day fund w/ 3 months of wages
- Stretch your body to prevent injury
- Stretch your mind to prevent stagnation
- Buy a fire extinguisher (or know where one is)



A winter well spent involves reflection, gratitude for being prepared, and planning for the coming spring. Winter is where successful people leap even further ahead by capitalizing on opportunities. As Jim Rohn puts it, **“We either improve, or we regress, for never do we remain the same.”**



Rohn also emphasizes one of [Charlie Munger's 25 psychological tendencies](#): #19 Use it or lose it. What we do not use, we lose. All of the following atrophy from lack of use: strength, intelligence, social skills, reasoning, our potential.

The unprepared suffer uncertainty and fear. Love and harmony give way to accusations and anger. “Love and harmony give way to accusation and anger.” **The enduring pain of regret is far heavier than the diminishing pain of discipline.**

One of my favorite paragraphs in the whole book on visualizing the hard times to encourage effort during the good times:

The time to experience the horror of a winter for which we are unprepared is in the springtime, and in our mind. Let the imagination pain for us the chilling winds, snow-blown fields, and ice-covered trees; let us experience in our mind's eye the wailing of a hungry child, and the disappointment showing in the eyes of the one we love' let us emotionally experience the fumbling for excuses, and apologize for our past mistakes, and the fear that comes with a knock on the door, or the delivery of the mail. Anticipating these scenes in advance can provide the shock that moves us into massive effort in the spring, that those efforts might prevent our horrified imaginings from becoming reality.

The main challenge when you're surrounded by winter is to not let it affect our ability to **recognize the arrival of spring.**

Adversity is seldom attributable to some one, or some thing, outside of ourselves. To blame outside influences for the circumstances of winter is a convenient excuse for misplacing responsibility.

Then Jim Rohn drops the hammer:

[blaming outside influences] is the normal human tendency to place blame for a winter of life on someone else, which is why most humans reap the result of mediocrity that accompanies such behavior.

Rohn doesn't mince words here. He's arguing that one's *propensity to blame* is correlated with a *mediocre life*. Remember this the next time you point the finger.



Rohn goes on to indict unproductive conversation—akin to the “talk is cheap” adage—and suggests that lamenting one's woes “dulls the senses from the harsh reality of how “things” really are. Complaining is an escape, just like TV, alcohol, drugs, and gossip.

The same euphoria is found in television and those who use it as an escape from their own empty life.

The average Netflix user watches [20 hours per week](#). And while there's a time and a place for a good show, 20 hours a week is a lot of time spent on NOT improving your life. Jason Calcanis takes it a step further:

All the answers are out there, but people still watch five hours of TV a day and complain about opportunity.

There's that word again: complain. If there's one thing you take away from this book, let it be an awareness of our own thoughts and being viscerally aware that complaining is 1) unproductive, and 2) indicative of an unseasonal mindset.

So what is the right way to spend the winter? Gratitude and introspection. Gratitude for the achievements that rewarded you, and gratitude for the adversities that strengthened you.

Introspection should be aimed at 1) purpose, and 2) process. Have you misplaced your sense of purpose? Do you have a process for moving through life? This is where sincerity matters—this is not the season to fool ourselves, to delude ourselves that things are better than they are. If it's bad, let's call it bad and start to deal with it:

- Are your finances running wild?
- Addicted to your smartphone?
- Is your marriage becoming platonic?
- Are you trapped in social media-induced comparison?*
- Are you binge eating late at night?
- Drinking more than you know you should?
- Are you overweight and unmotivated?
- Are you stuck in a job you don't like? A career you don't like?
- Have your friendships deteriorated?

*Teddy Roosevelt was known to say, "*Comparison is the thief of joy.*" With this in mind, it's hard to enjoy social media without subliminal—if not blatant—comparison. Maybe it's time to turn off the brag feed? Take back your joy :)

If so, there's no better time to plan than a cold winter. Get a piece of paper, a hot cup of tea, and start to make a new plan. Read new books, seek new ideas—fertilize your mind so that life-changing **behavior** can grow.

Evolution is merely revolution at a slower pace, and that constant gradual change is the order of the universe.



When I first read the above quote from this book, I texted it to several close friends. The wisdom and simplicity of this sentence helped me understand that in order to evolve and improve our lives, we must be willing to start a revolution in our daily lives.

It *feels* uncomfortable and disruptive in the moment, but we must be willing to **declare war** on our former selves. This is the requirement for personal change. Eventually all these mini-revolutions of character, habit and choices compound into personal evolution.

IX. Defeat—The Best Beginning

Don't pray for things to be easier, rather, pray for more obstacles and more challenges, for it is out of these that man's character and will to succeed are formed.

Many success stories start after a severe life ass-kicking. Why is it that certain people get angry, frustrated and disgusted enough to change? How are they able to muster their **talents, abilities, desire** and **determination**—while others seem doomed to repeat the folly?



Your present situation—success, failure, or somewhere in between—is temporary. Such is the dynamism of life. All circumstances can be influenced by our will. Elon Musk has been on the verge of bankruptcy twice in the last ten years. Today he has a net worth of [\\$292 billion](#).

And while we all likely don't have the ferocious intelligence of Elon Musk, we still have a powerful decision in our hands: *Will we decide to achieve, or merely exist?*

Do not walk in front of me, I may not follow.
Do not walk behind me, I may not lead.
But walk beside me, and be my friend.