

# A Change Of Seasons

Fall has arrived at The Outdoor Academy with the hills and mountains of Western North Carolina exploding in bursts of color. The air has grown crisp. The sun retreats further southward, turning the afternoon light a golden hue. The smell of woodsmoke is drifting through the forest.

The changing seasons remind me to notice the changes I see within myself and the people around me. The students of Semester 49 who showed up on opening day looking shy and unsure are now stepping up confidently as leader of the day. People who once had little interest in being creative are out whittling spoons during their free time. Students who previously believed they could not be good at math are realizing that yes they can if they put some effort into it.

This is why we as faculty love to work at The Outdoor Academy. It brings us joy to see our students succeed at a subject that has tripped them up back home, or to discover something powerful about themselves while out backpacking. We are here to help students facilitate positive change within themselves, to help them see that they are more capable than they imagined and that their perceived weaknesses are instead opportunities for growth.

But change can be hard. The seasons teach us that for growth to occur, something else must pass away. Students must grapple with reconciling who they were with who they are becoming and who they want to be. These are the challenging conversations I most enjoy having with them.

Though we all like to cling to what we think we know and who we think we are, watching the leaves drift down and the days grow shorter reminds us that nothing around us ever stays the same and so we too must change. At The Outdoor Academy, we hope to teach our students to embrace that change, to see it as a chance to begin anew in every moment. And so we look out the windows of our cabins, notice the fallen leaves, and celebrate that now there is space for new growth to occur.

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