

Tending the Soul

With

Healing Ritual

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Part 1

The Healing Power of Ritual

A ritual is the enactment of a myth. By participating in the ritual, you are participating in the myth. And since myth is a projection of the depth wisdom of the psyche, by participating in a ritual,... you are being, as it were, put in accord with that wisdom, which is the wisdom that is inherent within you anyhow. Your consciousness is being reminded of the wisdom of your own life.

~ Joseph Campbell (“The Wisdom of J.C.” Interviews)

People need Rituals. In today’s modern Western culture of progress and perpetual striving, the reflective qualities of religion, meditation, and ritual reside in the margins of our daily living. Yet many Western psyches yearn for a deeper experience with life and its mysteries. Despite the dominance of a material and scientific world-view, on a personal level, people still crave something more beautiful and meaningful than what materiality and the analytics of logic can offer.

All of us yearn for meaning in life. We want to be moved, to feel loved, valued, and connected. Everywhere we turn, we feel the pressures of the material and rational world-views. Many of us are drawn into the belief that having more of something—knowledge, stuff, time, position—will improve the character of our existence, or make us happy.

Even as we rush to meet deadlines and objectives, we yearn for fulfillment—for something more than what the common life offers. We know material things won’t sustain or nourish us. But, what will? To find the something more that nourishes our souls, we must go deeper than the common realms of mainstream reality.

Mainstream existence is defined by the workings of the conscious mind. Yet, our conscious minds reflect only a fraction of who we are, how we really think, and how we relate to the universe. And this is where the importance of Ritual is demonstrated. Rituals offer ways to go beyond the restrictions of the conscious mind so as to nourish and balance the whole human—our body, our psyche, our soul and our relationships. Incorporating Ritual in our lifestyles provides a metaphysical foundation by which we can sustain and nourish ourselves and our loved ones.

In Part One of this book, I explain why people still need Rituals today and how enacting Ritual can help us to awaken and heal our deepest Self.

Part Two provides a menu and guide for personal Rituals designed to stimulate healing and transformational shifts. Most of these Rites are drawn from my accumulated work or re-inventions of mythic concepts. However, some of these are my adaptations of core processes I learned from others whom I wish to acknowledge. The Sandpainting and Fire Ceremony Rites are adaptations from Alberto Villoldo’s teachings, the unwinding *chakras* portion of the Rainbow Shower I first learned from Deepak Chopra, and the Sun and Moon salutations are adaptations of

yoga. It is my hope that as you journey through these pages, you will find yourself walking a path of self-discovery and inner beauty.

1: Understanding Ritual

I believe that if your culture or tradition doesn't have the specific ritual you are craving, then you are absolutely permitted to make up a ceremony of your own devising, fixing your own broken-down emotional systems with all the do-it-yourself resourcefulness of a generous plumber/poet.

~ Elizabeth Gilbert (*Eat, Pray, Love*)

Beyond the occasional cultural ceremonies we think of as Rituals, such as weddings or graduations, we need embodied Ritual moments that allow us to open the windows of our inner being to let our soul expand, ventilate, and be refreshed. These moments connect us to the world beyond us and reinforce our place within it.

The kind of spiritual or mythic Ritual I am describing here is distinguished with a capital R. Through such a mythic Ritual process, the body, mind, and heart can be brought into alignment, which allows us to achieve harmony with the living and divine world. Through Ritual we can bypass the conscious, rational mind and utilize our intuitive sensibilities to access our heart's wisdom. From this state of reverence and receptivity, we can reclaim a personal and direct relationship with the power of creation, and join many others in becoming co-creators of reality.

Throughout this text, I use the terms "the Sacred" and "the Divine" interchangeably to refer to the various transpersonal forces that exist naturally in the multi-dimensional universe. These include spirit guides, aspects of nature, and psychological forces that are part of the mythic cosmos. To be more specific, beyond the Creator or Great Spirit, the Sacred includes manifestations of divinity that infuse creation with that mysterious essence that intuitive people often sense below and above everyday existence. In religious terms, the Sacred begins with the Creator and includes, other gods, angels, guides, power places and entities, and living energies such as the Holy Spirit and *qi*. Psychologically, the Sacred includes the full range of archetypal forces, our unconscious or higher Self, and the collective or transpersonal unconscious.

For millennia, Rituals have served seekers, sages, mystics, and shamans in cultivating a relationship with these divine forces. Through the intuitive capacities of Ritual, these sages have engaged both internal and transpersonal subtle realities. The techniques of Ritual create access and opportunities for wisdom and healing, but whether we can learn from Ritual depends upon our ability to open and to trust. Sacred Rituals function independently of, but in harmony with, cultural and religious beliefs and can be adapted to virtually anyone's religious, spiritual, or psychological disposition.