



When I was young, I spent much of my time playing alone. It didn't feel lonely or sad, it felt like freedom to me. I sat in trees for hours, wandered thru the fields, sat at the base of a trees and dreamed.

I would gather stones, and immerse them in an old battered pot with water, grasses, found objects and flowers. It was my "soup" which never got cooked but was honored for its beauty. Our stone friends do love to be wet. (Grin) Another bit of play was to set fire to a small twig and write messages in the air, drawing shapes and watching them float away in the wind. (Don't ask my where I got the matches and don't tell mom.) I would line stones up in the mud along our small lake so the frogs would have a place to sit. I would sit in the culvert under our dirt road and watch the water flow over the stones...the leaves drift by, knowing no one could see me in this secret place.

It wasn't until I was much older that began to see this play of a child as creating magic for myself. I was honoring those elements of nature that I found around me, engaging with them and becoming more for the interaction. Maybe they became more also. I was seeing what others had no time to see.

Now as a "grown-up" I still do some similar things... and now I call it ceremony and ritual. It gives me a path to celebrate my world, honoring what I want to honor, asking for help in creative ways and finding stillness to receive.

Come along, I'll show you how you can make magic too!

A bit of history

Rituals are our most trusted guide during times of change. They give us a sense of stability in the face of uncertainty and offer us a tangible and time tested way to acknowledge that as life changes, we too must change.-

Day Schildkret, Morning Altars

In the modern world, our ceremonies and rituals include pausing to honor birth, marriage and death. Beyond those, some of us throw a party with cake or wine to celebrate our birthdays, our successes or to bemoan our failures. We post on social media and then hope someone replies, "Happy birthday to you!". All those things are nice but ceremony and ritual goes further for me, deeper.

In tribal communities, there were gatherings to celebrate the seasons, to honor a hunt, to help young people understand how their roles changed when they grew from childhood to becoming an adult in the community. People helped us make transitions- from single person to part of a couple to being a parent. The community celebrated our victories and helped us heal through our defeats. Often a holy person or shaman presided over some ceremonies but individual practices or rituals were common to help call in what we needed or to set our visions for ourselves.



The shaman sought direction for the community or set up an environment where an individual felt supported in seeking direction for themselves. These ceremonies and rituals of each community were built on the needs of the times and of the people, on the plants and other resources that were part of their world. Palo Santo was used in South America and sage was honored in North America because that is what grew here.

We live in a transformed world. Many of us were raised in a world that honored the physical, the visible, the logical and practical. That world view brought us to a place where our world is not peaceful, not equitable and not sustainable. So, Mother Earth and the powers of the spiritual realm (however you choose to define all that) have said, "Enough!" and the energies of the planet have shifted. While decisions before were made based on money and power (and greed for both of those) this new world honors love and compassion.

This statement may sound unfounded to you but... I've gotten this message from many teachers and thru my own intuition. That doesn't mean that you should believe it. But it might be worthy of consideration. Let me elaborate..

We are creatures of habit. We see what we expect to see. Thus you notice your partners new hair style only to learn they changed it a month ago? (Grin) There is a fable (meaning I can't confirm it but makes sense to me) that when the tall masted ships first arrived in North America, the natives

thought of them as strange clouds because such large vessels with billowing sails were beyond their imagination at the time.

So, you are used to the world being competitive and greedy... so you expect it to be. The media loves to confirm our societal disfunction to us on a daily basis. But the media isn't as ready to confirm the world's good, the acts of wisdom and compassion. We have to look a bit harder for those. Beyond that, consider just being that... being more loving and compassionate in your daily life.

Energy begets energy... meaning if you shine our love and goodness, you are surrounded by that energy. People sense it around you and are affected in a positive way. You shine love light and it lifts you and those around you. That energy shines from you, your work, your writings... the way you walk down the street. Similarly, if you embrace the old way- that the world is a piece of shit and falling apart, there's no hope, "we're all doomed"... well, people pick up on that too.

I see the world as my community, maybe the galaxy... but that's for another discussion. So, being kind and compassionate might affect the beings around me... but energy isn't isolated. There's not a pocket of my energy and your energy. Energy is communal, universal. Energy to me is spirit, spirit is universal. Since our workshop isn't focused on this topic, allow me to just say that I am speaking from the perspective that whatever you see god as... that being/power/energy is you. The holy, the spirit is in you, not far away. It's also in everyone else- those who get it and those who never will. This magic wonder also lives in plants, animals, bugs, rocks, water and air, in our very planet herself. All that is... to me that's god, all that is. You don't have to agree, just spelling it out so you understand my perspective and I don't have to choose to explain myself as we go thru this workshop. You are always welcome to and I honor your understanding also. For now, let's agree that every bit of goodness that we can shine out lifts the energy cloud or world a bit higher. So you're not alone in choosing to shine your bit of light... your positive efforts lift the whole. Yes, you DO make a difference.

Holy crap, how'd did I get on that channel. OH, I wanted to say that in tribal communities we think of one person as being the shaman but that's not true. All were considered part of that role in their own ways. Some had the gift of plants and healing, some visions, some music or dance. Each person knew that they were empowered to be an important part of their community. And you, my friend in this wonderful changed world are an important part of the world community.

So while we might have been raised honoring the physical, visible and practical/ logical... all this time, there also were the factors of the spiritual, the invisible and the magical. Our tribal ancestors knew that, and with the shift in our world's energy, you are now being reminded. Our life is physical AND spiritual, you are visible AND invisible, and we seek the practical AND the magical. This new world has thinned or torn down the veil between those dualities and you can empower this new world that has arrived by living in all your power.

You are a physical and spiritual being. One or the other aspect of you is not better. The physical has abilities that the spiritual does not. The spiritual part of you has powers and vision that empower what you can do in the physical world. The spiritual part of you jumped onboard with your body because without a physical presence, the spirit can have more difficulty interacting with the physical realm. My work, including this workshop on ceremony and ritual, is intended to help you connect your physical world with your spirit, your invisible, your magic. Thanks for joining the ride.

Which means what?

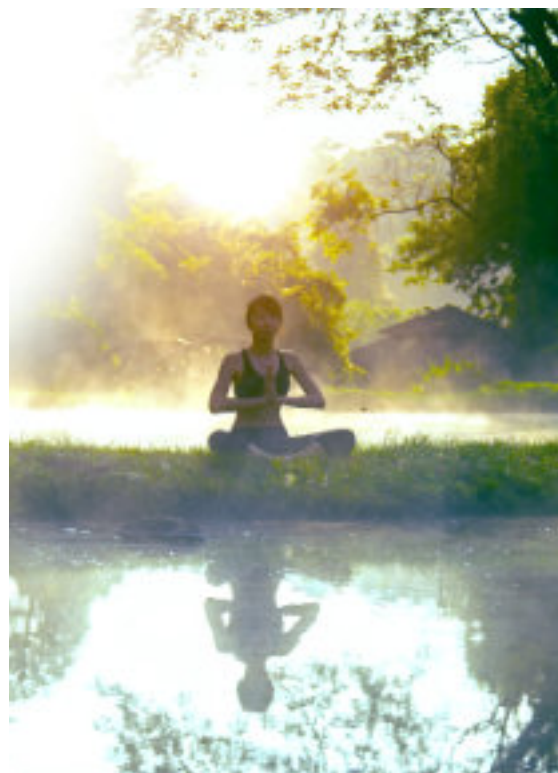
Ceremony and ritual... such lovely, even mysterious terms. Here's where we get to define them a bit. But remember, these definitions come through some of my teachers. However, truth is... definitions are not so important. Spirit will not step back and say, "Oh, I'm not helping out here because your terminology doesn't suit me." Ritual and ceremony are creative processes. Just as there's no one right way to create a beautiful piece of art, nor is art's beauty agreed upon by all... your ceremony or ritual is yours to birth. Have fun with it.

In the book "Awakening to the Spirit World", Sandra Ingerman opens the chapter on ceremony and ritual this way.

"Ceremonies and rituals are performed to honor the spirits, to celebrate life and changes in Nature, to acknowledge rites of pause, to give thanks and to create change. Performing a ritual or ceremony creates transformation."

Transformation is a powerful choice of words. It means change, healing, growing up, growing old, changing circumstances or supply or the weather. Transformation involves the physical but also the spiritual. It affirms our connection, our very essence as empowered beings. You don't have to hope "you're doing it right." Your intuition of how to celebrate an occasion is always right if it's based in love and compassion. You don't have to hope the spirits will listen as your spirit created it and your spirit is connected to the all. Again, sit back to relax and have fun with it. I never thought twice when I was 5 and making smoke signals to the clouds if I was doing anything wrong or right. It just was me and that is inherently good.

Back to definitions. In my understanding a ceremony has a predetermined structure and goal. You create the structure and the goal. You set an intention and want to include certain things to reach a specific goal. A ritual on the other hand, is more free form. We still set an intention but the end result might be different from your expectations. Ritual is more an idea of



handing the situation off to the spiritual, invisible, magical aspects of life and they might surprise us. In ceremony, you direct what you wish to happen- “we’ll sing, then we’ll arrange some stones, we’ll write our wishes then dance and close in by reading this poem.” In ritual, we ask spirit to drive, then sit and watch what happens.

Ceremonies are often structured so a group can participate, creating a path so community can share a purpose. Ceremonies can include group meditation and prayer, group dancing, sharing a feast or joining in a pep rally. Weddings are a ceremony, all gather together to listen to the prayer, the sharing of vows, exchanging rings, a blessing, a kiss. We’ve all attended enough weddings to understand that there are all sorts of ways to accomplish that goal. All are valid and good if based in love and compassion.

In ritual, we set an intention. We call on our spiritual selves, our higher wisdom, our ancestors... to help us with what we need. Then magic takes over and we don’t really know what the outcome will be but we’re hoping for something wonderful. Asking for healing should be a ritual practice, as we know we can’t direct exactly what will happen but we trust it will be beneficial to all. Some healers make the error of focusing on what is wrong with their client. We should never focus on what is wrong/broken. We work towards bringing energy to the whole person- body and spirit. We hope they feel wholeness, peace, freedom knowing that the challenges they are facing may serve a purpose well beyond our understanding.

Rituals might be small tasks we do daily or regularly, alone at home. We may visualize health and happiness in our home. We honor spiritual aspects that support us. I burn a sage leaf before I tackle a task just to clear myself and the space. My dog has to spin around 3 times before she’ll come in the door. I don’t understand her ritual but I choose to honor it. Why not? (Grin)

Ceremonies often come at particular times of seasons, phase of the moon, phases of life. We can do these alone or in a group. Ceremony involves agreement of those participating so they might know what is coming, what their role in the practice might be and what the desired outcome is.

There are no clear definitions, just some general understandings. Don’t get slowed down by definitions. Rather allow yourself to be excited by the possibilities. We don’t hesitate to dream, many of us pray with great freedom. So look at ceremony and ritual as ways you might help connect your physical world with your spiritual world.

Elements of the practice

Key ingredients to creating ceremony and ritual

1. Set a strong clear intention of what you wish to accomplish.
2. Have a plan what you want to include in this experience- this music, this crystal, this material to smudge, instruments. This becomes a to-do list to prepare so you don't have to go running in the middle of your practice to find a lighter... or whatever.
2. Stay focused through the practice. Don't allow yourself to become distracted as that disconnects you from your energy, your spirit. I try staying more in my heart center focus than in my head.
3. Create a place, a state of harmony in this work. Harmony and peace in the place, in the altar if there is one, in the group, in the timing. Be open the things will likely work out just like they are supposed to.
4. Consider simplicity especially as you being this work. Some ceremonies might be more involved but know that shamans are known for rituals that are short and sweet, getting to the point- open the door, connect to spirit, state the intention, honor those helping and give thanks.

Intention

Just a few words about intention. Sandra Ingerman, in her book "Medicine for the Earth" shares a story of a woman who set the intention of finding a rich husband. The woman laughingly shared this story with Ingerman as she introduced her husband, Rich. They were poor but happy.

Be clear about what you want to accomplish. Use words that explain exactly what you need. Saying you want your heart center to open can mean you want to be



more loving or you're inviting heart surgery. That's sort of a joke but many have shared that they got what exactly they asked for. I'm not sharing that to make you fearful, but to encourage you to really dig into what you need. If I'm seeking companionship, should I ask for a life partner, a pet or community? Look into your own hopes and dreams. Wishing your daughter and her husband would quit fighting, when if they continue to fight and part ways, then they both might find true happiness.

This train of thought carries over into healing. Initially, you might think that you should ask for a disease or malady to be removed. But obstacles fall into our paths so we learn and grow and evolve into higher, wiser beings. I can't tell you how many people tell me that their experiences with cancer saved their lives by forcing them to change. So when doing healing work or setting our intentions, try allowing your attention to slide down from your head to your heart and make simple requests.

May they find healing on their path (without defining healing of what.)

May there be peace in the world (rather than wishing ill for one side in a war.)

May they embrace the power of spirit in their life.

May they connect with their own higher wisdom and purpose.

Aspects that some include in some ceremonies-

Before the ceremony- In many traditions, it is common for everyone to bring something to include on the altar or center space in the ceremony. This isn't necessary but you can ask folks to bring a favorite crystal or photo or special something to put on the altar during the ceremony. They then retrieve their item to take home with them. In some ancient traditions, a medicine pouch or bundle that contains special bits of herbs, beads, stones, medicines might be placed the center. In some South American traditions, this personal bundle is called mesa. In Peru, we would stack our mesas in front of the space where the despachos (sacred mandalas) were assembled.

- **opening**- a song or statement to greet the participants and makes the purpose clear

- **offering** of gratitude for those attending in physical and spiritual forms

- **calling** to aspects that you feel might contribute to the event. In some traditions, they call in spirits from 4 or 6 or 7 directions. Some traditions look to the elements- earth, air, fire, water, spirit (with also many derivatives to this list.) Some traditions call in specific spirits from their homes. Some call to ancestors, angels, energies, planets... you do you. I feel that in coming, I bring the all-that-is with me as do others. I simply call our

attention to the physical and spiritual, the visible and invisible, the practical/ logical and magical.

- a time of **blessing and connection**. Some use a method of purifying as some use sage or other smudging. I don't personally like to think we walk around "dirty" but I do love the scents of sage, cedar , sweetgrass et al. I do this part to honor traditions that I learned from. I often use sound here too, using bowls, or bells or playing music so that all in attendance (and sometimes that's just me) get to transition, to walk thru a "doorway" into the practice. This is a time to accept the blessings of being together, of the smells and sounds, to connect and ground to the earth below and the sky above. The burning and sounds, the grounding and connecting reminds us that the energy you are creating will be shared with the world.

-The **body of the ceremony/ritual** might be allowing all to speak in turn, by dancing together, by sharing a reading or a song. You might share a meal here or lay on the ground in silence. One tradition I trained with would pass a pipe around, others pass a talking stick. You may all go on a journey or sit in meditation.

- **Closing** the ceremony brings everyone's attention back to purpose, calling them back to the now. Expressing gratitude to all. Some release the spirits or powers they may have called in. Take some time and allow everyone to reconnect with the now and the "normal."



Arranging things- or what is an altar?

A ceremony can be arranged in many ways. Arrangement can depend on how many people will be there. 25 or more might sit in chairs in rows like in a business meeting or in church. There might be hundreds of you stretched out in a grassy field. A smaller group might work as a circle. Regardless of layout, let there be an energetic focal point. I've always called this an altar but I'm sure other terms can apply.

An altar is where I place stones, crystals, other element connections- water, flowers, food, scents, sticks, leaves, photos, candles, written messages. Not all this is necessary... just some ideas to feed your creativity, remind you of your power. In some traditions, this is where attendees might add their stones or bundles or whatever they've brought to add to the power.

Clean and clear the space then place what is important to you. When others add to the altar, it's okay... let them place their stuff as feels right to you. Do be careful of live candles... sorry, it's the mama in me. (grin).

If you don't have chairs for all, suggest they bring one. Or ask them to come with yoga mat, pillow and blanket or whatever might be needed in your space. The image below shows a space I set up for a live moon ceremony I did online. Perfectly imperfect.



Ideas

I'm laughing as I begin to write this section. I want to include a list of ideas- purposes for your ceremony or ritual and different aspects or activities you could do. Laughing because I could probably write this chapter for the rest of forever and not get done. But here goes.

Seasons, phases of the moon- Holidays get plenty of attention but throw them in here if you want. Maybe you want to celebrate your birthday with a gratitude ceremony (and cake of course, hah!) You can learn more about traditional practices of celebrating the shift of seasons, or phases of the moon, or holidays other than the norm.

Phases of life- How much could some young people benefit from living in a society that helped them transition from child to adult with some mentorship, explanation and a ceremony? I'll bet you know a few women with grey hairs arriving that would love to celebrate this phase of life, rather than feeling old and unneeded. Might we offer a ceremony on the passing of a friend or family member because the traditional funeral service didn't feel personal enough for us?

Ceremonies for couples to celebrate engagements, being still together or parting ways

Rituals to set a **goals** for a new job, career, relationship or other opportunity

Daily rituals **to help you stay focused** on new goals, changes in attitude or behaviors

Use a **fire ceremony** to explore beliefs about yourself that are holding you back, write them down on paper and safely burn them to help you release them. Fire ceremonies help us let go, cleanse and free us. The burning is also seen by some as carrying our wishes to the above, whatever that might mean to you. A fire ceremony might be building a bonfire, using your fireplace or burning a candle.

A **water ceremony** can also be a way to offer cleansing you yourself or to honor water as an entity. Could your morning washing of your face be a brief, cleansing ceremony to wash away the day before and start fresh? A water ceremony could also be pausing by a body of water to offer gratitude and blessings to the water itself as a being.

An **earth ceremony** might help us celebrate our gardens or our connection to nature. This could be a family event to get that garden prepared and planted or it could be you, alone in the woods, pressing your back against a tree and gazing up, listening to the tree's message.

Smudging is part of many ceremonies but can be a sweet ritual unto itself. Did you know that different plants share their energies differently when burned? This varies with author and especially depends on what you sense from the plants. Trust your sensations when smudging or using aromatherapy. A place to start-

- sage brings clearing, for change, letting go
- cedar offers a sense of protection
- sweetgrass brings a touch of the feminine, blessings of Mother Earth
- lavender is thought to invite spirits and healing (but for me... it feels overbearing)

Cairn ritual- stacking of stones to commemorate a place or occasion. Each member of the group contributing or placing a stone. The Jewish stack coins on headstones.

Feasting ceremony is easy to figure out. We eat, together but perhaps with a singular intention or purpose- to celebrate something, to remember someone.

Mindful eating is fun for a snack or to try at the beginning of a meal. Notice each bite with gratitude for the plant or animal, for those who grew and nurtured it, for those who shipped it, packaged it, sold it.

Wishing ritual- Think of writing down the things you wish to attract into your life on a piece of paper. Every morning you pick up that paper (or hang it on the bathroom mirror) and imagine or visualize having all those things in your life. Imagine how life might feel different look different. Then call those things to you- however you might wish to do that. I put the list under a favorite crystal or on a plate with a symbol of sacred geometry on it. You do you.

Healing ceremony might be for you, for a friend, for a part of the world, for our planet. I mentioned in intentions that you must use care in healing work. You might think you know what another person needs but you really don't. Not everyone recovers from a disease or injury and that might be part of their path in this life. They might have to go through a disease and treatment to see how they want to change or grow. In healing, I'm very careful to ask for healing as meets their purposes, for bringing of comfort, peace, wisdom and love.

Mandala ceremony- When I was in Peru a few years ago, I spent a month with the Q'ero people experiencing ancient Incan ceremonies over 10 days. A part of each of their ceremonies was the making of despacho, an offering of plant material, food, sweets arranged beautifully (according to their many traditions) which is then burned as an offering to the spirits. This reminded me of mandala making. There's a book on this tradition "Morning Altars" by Day Schildkret which is beautiful or check out MorningAltars on Instagram (morningaltars)

In other words, imagine gathering different colors of fall leaves and arranging them on your patio or in the words as an offering of time, beauty and honor to Mother Nature.
Place image Despacho 1



In summary

I have included a lot of information and perceptions in this handout that we didn't have time to cover in our workshop. I explain some of my concepts so you'll understand why I might say or do what I do. These perceptions change and grow as I change and grow. Your perceptions may differ and that's lovely. May you also change and grow to meet our world's needs.

The key to everything, whether ceremony and ritual or how to interact with others is to remember that we live in a new world. To encourage its growth, we must honor its new values. Our priorities in all things must be love and compassion. This is a tall order, I understand. I have to keep my inner critic in check often. But as you approach your design of ceremonies and rituals, always focus on doing the loving thing, on treating other beings (that includes people, plants, animals, rocks, water, air et al) with compassion.

Each of us is spirit and physical. You and I are aware of those two parts of our being but daily we meet many who are not aware of the spiritual aspect of existence. I have been well taught to never feel like I have to preach to others about this. Nor should I suggest how they might be a better person. I am to view them with love and imagine energetically connecting with their spirit. I can speak to them as I honor both aspects of them. In doing that, in viewing them as spiritual beings, I am empowering that spirit within them to make itself known but I'm no part of controlling that.

When you interact with others as though they are body and spirit, you help energize that connection within but also you are operating from a plane of this new world of ours. That energizes the new world and brings it into greater visibility.

If this sort of teaching resonates with you, I suggest you check into the writings of Paul Selig, a channeler for his guides.

Now go make ceremonies and rituals of love and light. Empower yourself and your personal connection to spirit and be all you can be. I'll try to do the same.

Much love and light, suni moon

About suni

Since I was young, I've been on a quest to learn. My mission is to remember and understand the mystical world- seeking insight into mysteries beyond ordinary human knowledge. I've studied sacred writings of many traditional religions, shared in Lakota ceremonies, trekked thru the Andes to learn from descendants of the Incas. I've trained in many healing modalities- energy healing, sound therapy, massage, qigong and more. I've followed the Yogic path beyond the poses to go deeply into meditation and breathwork. I've worked with gurus, shamans and wise men and women all over the world. I've wandered deep into mother nature learning to listen to the trees and receive power from the earth below and the sun and moon above.

Thru all this exploration, I look for simple truths common to many paths. I embrace the power of sound, the wonder of meditation, the strength of our breath and the essential need for self-care on a daily basis. These ancient tools are presented in new ways that suit the energy of our times. I share these tools with you to help you expand, awaken, heal, calm and explore the wonder of the unseen, the less known world.

The most important truth I've learned is that higher wisdom, connection to spirit, awakening, enlightenment isn't something you get from someone else. You came with all that built into you. Life in a world wrapped in fear and greed didn't likely help you find that message. In today's changing world, in the new energies here to help elevate our world- the wisdom, the light you seek is within you. The simple practices I teach are intended to help you connect your physical you and the higher self. That can happen easily and, it grows with practice. The practices are easy and they bring you what you need. Just looking for some hope, or calmness- then you'll find tools here that will help. If you're seeking higher wisdom or to journey to other energetic worlds, that is available to you also.

I am your guide and I share with you what I've learned. You might not resonate with some of the practices. You might really connect and decide to explore further on your own. Great! My path was carved with the teachings of many, many beings and I trust you'll find the path that suits you. Have fun

Image from Wiraqocha temple near San Pedro de Cacha. I served as high priestess for my group of journeyers. Notice no flowing robes, no fancy anything and it was the most powerful ceremony ever for me.



References

Some books I quoted, did research with, read recently or learned a lot from. Not suggesting you go buy them all but you'll be surprised how many are available through the library.

"Awakening to the Spirit World- The Shamanic Path of Direct Revelation"- Sandra Ingerman and Hank Wesselman

"Voices From the Ancestors- Xixanx and Latinx Spiritual Expressions and healing Practices"- edited by Laura Medina and Martha Gonzales

"Ritual as Remedy- Embodied Practices for Soul Care"- Mara Branscombe

"Nature's Hidden Oracles- From flowers to feathers & shells to stones- a practical guide to natural divination"- Liz Dean

"Modern Guide to Energy Clearing"- Barbara Moore

"Modern Altars" by Day Schildkret

"The Book of Innocence" or any of the other books by Paul Selig.

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