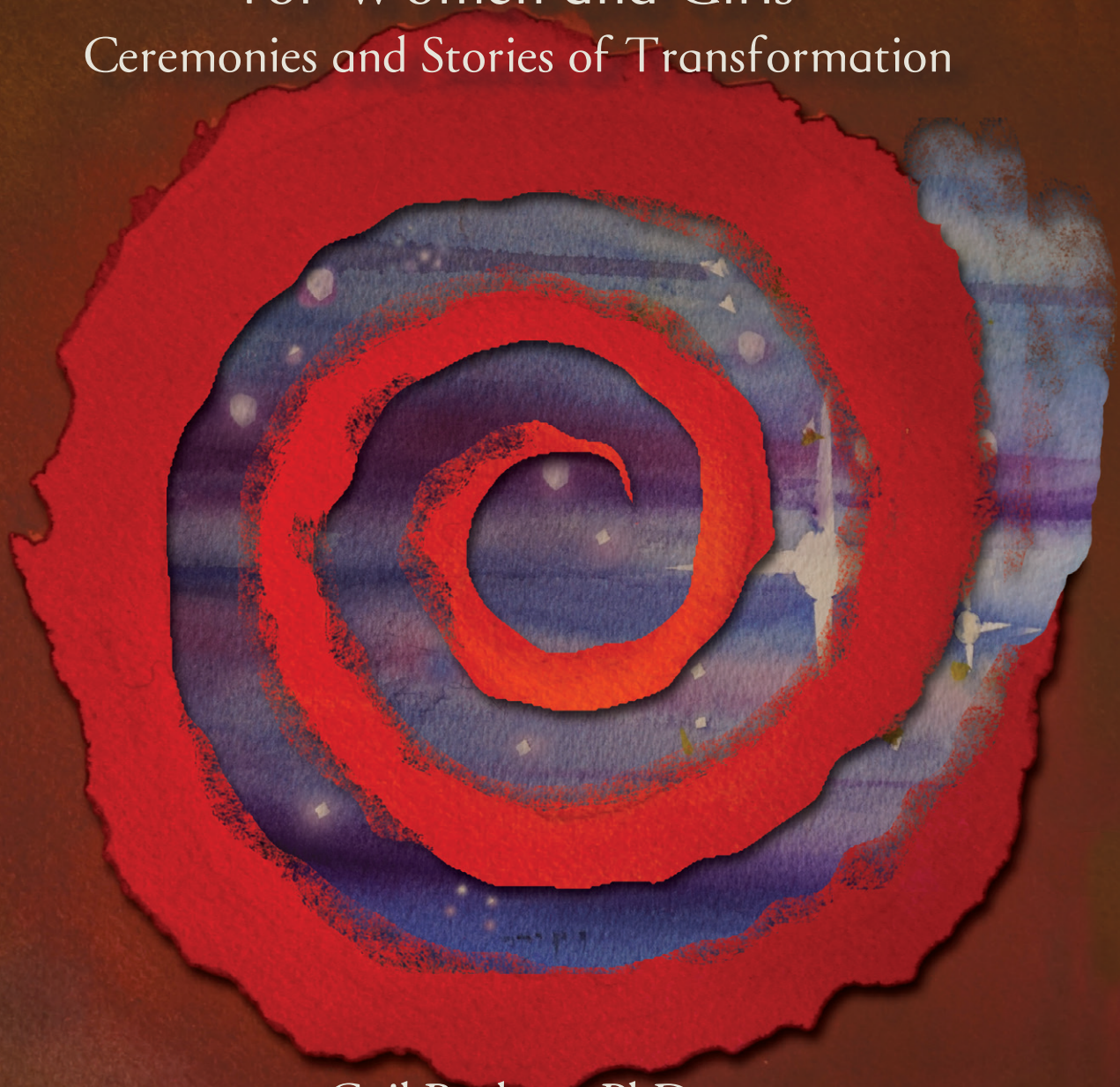


NINE PASSAGES

for Women and Girls

Ceremonies and Stories of Transformation



Gail Burkett, PhD

The Life Spiral



NINE PASSAGES

for Women and Girls

Ceremonies and Stories of Transformation

Gail Burkett, PhD, author
Janis Monaco Clark, editor
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**Nine Passages for Women and Girls
Ceremonies and Stories of Transformation**

Children [Birth, Middle Child, First Blood]

Adolescents [First Blood, First Flight, Womanhood Bloom]

Adults [Womanhood Bloom, Deepening Womanhood, Elder Encore]

Elders [Elder Encore, Spiritual Elder, Death]

Categories: Rites of Passage, Women's Studies, Ritual, Mentoring, Developmental Psychology, Transformation, Women's Spirituality, Child Development, Anthropology

Dedication

Seriously, this book is dedicated to Mentors.

All Mentors.

Mentoring is the way forward and the change we need to see.

To help me understand something more about myself,

I am grateful to the Mentor Spirit I received from these glorious teachers:

Sharon Sweet, Rick Medrick, Susan Morgan, and Joe Meeker,

I thank you.

Honoring Recent Teachers

Clarissa Pinkola Estés said in her wonderful audio, *How to be an Elder*,

“We all know how to do Rites of Passage, it comes from inherent knowledge of ritual.”

In *The Water of Life: Initiation and the Tempering of the Soul*, Michael Meade said,

“Initiation involves an increase in knowledge, especially self-knowledge, as well as a loss of innocence.”

Expressed so well in this excerpt offered by **Bill Plotkin** in *Nature & the Human Soul: Cultivating Wholeness and Community in a Fragmented World* © 2008

“A rite of Passage, after all — even the most effective and brilliantly designed ceremony — rarely causes a shift from one distinct stage of life to the next. Much more often rites of Passage only confirm or celebrate a life transition that has already (although recently) been achieved by the individual, accomplished through years of steady developmental progress.

What happens between life Passages is considerably more important to the process of maturation than are the Passages themselves (and their associated rites). The primary work of maturing takes place gradually every day as we apply ourselves to the developmental tasks of our current life stage. Children and adolescents need help with these tasks — help from mature adults. And that’s precisely where we are failing our youth.”

Helen M. Luke found her way into my heart from one of the women journeying through *Soul Stories*. I am grateful for this gift from Laurie Evans and the gift of Helen Luke’s wisdom.

“Each of us, as we journey through life, has the opportunity to find and to give his or her unique gift. Whether this gift is quiet or small in the eyes of the world does not matter at all, not at all; it is through the finding and the giving that we may come to know the joy that lies at the center of both the dark times and the light.”

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Invitation

A little prayer: Please guide me most benevolent spirit world, angels and helper-beings. Please guide me animal, plant, bird, and fish kingdoms. Celebrating your wild heritage, I offer my gratitude for sightings, visitations, and the blessing of your company seen through tracks and signs. Please guide me friends, relations, and family, I owe my life and breath to you. I give thanks for all life not mentioned, seen and unseen, the standing and fallen trees, the mycelium running between as the virtual support systems of our Great Mother Earth. I feel the blessed support from our Moon and Sun.



Rites of Passage or Passage Rituals, what does this mean? A natural intersection where an internal biological clock meets a spiritual longing, this is often the case. After one round of seasons, everything feels different. With a language that is slowly returning to the culture, welcome each biological change and make a ceremony that marks your maturity; release old patterns of behavior so that new ones may find room to grow. Ultimately, Passage ceremonies celebrate accumulated change and growth. By marking the expansion of your body, mind, and spirit, personal evolution of your inner Genius is sparked to seek more of life—experiences, curiosities, and spiritual answers. A Rites of Passage ceremony is the springboard for a new quest on a timeline marked by your Soul. See the glossary, [here](#).¹

For the longest time, I held this question: How can we bring Rites of Passage back to the culture? It seems like such a simple question: Nothing is further from the truth, except there is hope.

The language has disappeared, so that is a big consideration. Fluency will take some time. Biological changes common to all people offer an entrance, these doorways belong to everyone. I love to focus a light on the generations who missed Passage Rituals, parents and grandparents: Through some catalyst of change, we did transform, we did have a personal experience with initiation. Generally, no one witnessed our change so no one else benefited and very often the catalyst came without invitation and we would not wish a repeat. Often ritual was completely missing. Rites of Passage ceremonies smooths out all this roughness and makes change a welcome event.

There is a way to harmonize with the Soul who guides us, by seeking change consciously, by listening for our original instructions, and by meeting a transformation with a ritual. This is the way of change. When we face the inevitability of change, cross a Threshold, and greet the tender new stage of life, change will feel harmonious. When we accept that maturity is desirable, it can happen by honoring our stories and by releasing our attachment to the past. With the Spiral of Life metaphor, we can know ourselves better and create a clearer vision for the journey ahead. When Passage Rituals are shared inter-generationally, the bridge rises naturally between the generations. I feel like a pioneering girl and woman and an Elder simultaneously.

The Life Spiral



Before we can talk about the Rites for each Passage, we must find our place. I am in the small space between Elder Encore and Spiritual Elder, a place of growth and excitement, a place of mystery and hope. I have carefully danced myself through a review of all of my stages which I personally consider an Elder's initiation; I unearthed the catalysts of change that created each Threshold and how new challenges were metaphorically represented by cobblestones.

I invite you to gaze into this Spiral and find yourself; find the members of your clan. I invite you to become innovative with me. There are stories to be told and ceremonies to be made.²

As I was taught about Rites of Passage, through academic circles, a

framework was provided which includes hearing a call from one's Soul, separating from one's ordinary life, facing and crossing a Threshold to wander alone in the wilderness in a seeking manner, and returning to a community ceremony of welcome and integration.³ What I call a portal is a liminal space of mystery, often created by ritual ceremony, a blended space for mind, body, and Soul to discover a new agreement. In cosmic terms, this may take a year, in women's terms, 13 Moons.

I am one of many now lifting up Rites of Passage for the culture because it's needed. I bow to the many others, gathered under one umbrella called Youth Passageways, all those bright thinkers with strong hearts are bringing Passage ceremonies to young people. This large group serves as the answer to my original question.⁴

Nine Passages is a book of stories with nine initiation ceremonies, including Birth and Death. It's a book of mentoring and offers many tools for moving a body with its Soul through natural biological changes. Each of the nine stages of development creates a seismic change longing to be noticed. Initiations are Soul-work that assists one's body coming more and more into consciousness of itself, Passage by Passage. Initiation ceremonies evolve the sense of self for all who attend and all who pay attention. This is a movement for Evolutionaries™.

Those who feel open to biological maturity as their birthright will resonate as kindred spirits. Anyone seeking personal evolution will resonate and will relish finding doorways. These women will not hesitate. Many Mothers will resonate with Rites of Passage offering the gift of maturity to their offspring even if they did not receive such celebrations. Perhaps out of a deeper knowing than even gentle kindness, seekers and Mothers will open this door for others.

Having enough research in me to satisfy me, I wish to show respect to the Medicine Wheel for bringing me through the past two decades. These ancient teachings have never remained buried for long, in fact, Earth Mother pre-

senting her seasons in harmony with the Sun helps the Wheel remain eternal. My muse has been nourished by an unimaginably long lineage of Grandmother Spirits who have watched over this work. Those nearlings woke me before dawn thousands of mornings to prepare me for the day when I could finally write this introduction.

With curiosity and readiness, with a global view and pregnant with these teachings, I have lived the challenge of personal development and of Passage ceremonies. Response to the urge to personally grow and evolve rises with each person's longing for fulfillment. I denied hearing the call until the pain was unbearable. Then, one dawn a decade after my Womanhood Bloom, a long line of elk walked past my bedroom window. The events that followed that miracle woke me up. Along such a circuitous route, I have learned to observe a reverence for our Great Mother, sweet Earth listens and holds and encourages. My preparation to create and now offer this work has come through long talks with my Council of Elders, women who have stepped up to offer their piece for this puzzle. Every Soul like the one who lives and breathes inside of you, holds the whole of this developmental span of life. Your inner circle is your tribe and your Village. Allow ceremony to join you together, with your soul, like a sacred marriage.

Mothers continue to give birth to both sexes of babies and in equal numbers. I do not plan a gender translation for this book at this time, but the biological changes may be interpreted. I grew from a baby girl into a big girl and finally a woman becoming and suddenly an Elder. It is a natural occurring phenomenon that I would write a book for women and our girls.

Best wishes on raising your children and raising yourselves.

First of Summer 2016, this comes with love, Gail Burkett

NOTES FOR INVITATION

1 Glossary for the Language of Passages:

Rites of Passage is time away from normal or mundane life, a time to be with spirit and Soul, listening for new instructions. In this liminal time, an altered state of being brings about true change.

An internal biological clock bundles an accumulation of life experiences which encourages a Threshold to appear. Allow resistance to fall away. Threshold is the moment, often an actual doorway, where you agree that change is unavoidable and desirable.

Spiritual longing is individually interpreted and usually most pronounced in silence.

Often an initiate needs 13 Moons to feel a new normal. This allows for comparison of old and new and for integration. After one round of seasons, everything feels different. Because we are women, change comes with our Moon cycles.

Biological changes occur under the science of ontology, unique to each person. Many psychologists use a 7 year mark, but ontology is not so rigid; e.g., my First Blood came at 13.5 and my Last Blood happened at 45.5.

Ceremony may be the trickiest of these terms, but gather a circle of friends (because they benefit), light candles on an altar, include meaningful symbolic treasures, sing songs, speak from your heart: What is inviting change, how do you feel, what do you hope for? You may be surprised to hear what you have to share; others in the circle may find their own longing to mark change.

Maturity is the most tested of any cultural measurement. Arrested development is extensive because communities have lost the habit of noticing and applauding growth and change.

Soul and quest, these terms are related and come with adolescent longings. If life is as luscious as your dreams, those longings turn into Adult and then Elder desires without ceasing.

- 2 If you have never experienced Rites of Passage for yourself, a great journey of a year may seem alluring. I wrote *Soul Stories: Nine Passages of Initiation* as an invitation for women over 30, often over 60, to find their change agents and experience a celebration of the many changes throughout their lives. I wish to honor Elders, circles of Elders, who will flourish with ceremonies in their years ahead.
- 3 Those early teachers included Arnold van Gennep whose *Rites of Passage* (1960) was posthumously published after his anthropological discoveries and treatise in 1905; Joseph Campbell's major works inspired the anthology *A Hero's Journey*, (2014, 3rd Edition); Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* (1994); Michael Meade,

The Water of Life: Initiation and the Tempering of the Soul; Martin Prechtel, *Long Life, Honey in the Heart* (2004), and one I have yet to study deeply, Bill Plotkin. These men all stand out as too important to not mention.

- 4 I am very pleased to stand with others who wish to uplift Rites of Passage ceremonies. Youth Passageways (.org) follows good council. So many spiritual rituals have elongated from Indigenous threads. Many of those did not lay down their threads as my Ancestors did; Indigenous Peoples are the original teachers and are being well respected by the efforts of this umbrella organization.



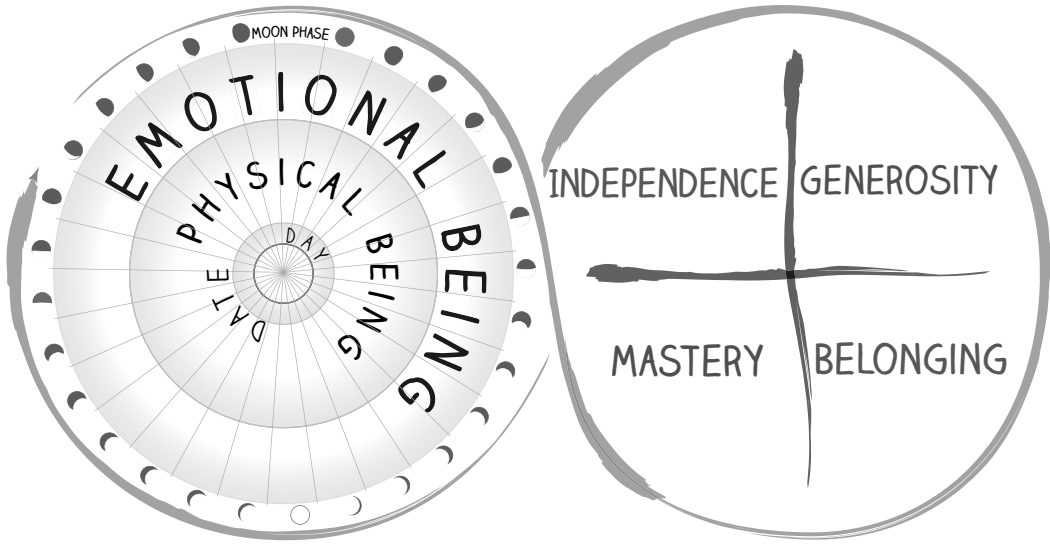
FIRST FLIGHT

THE INTENTION:

OFFERING THE GIFT OF WOMANHOOD TRAINING

*I speak directly from the heart of one who was once a girl. Mothers, I share these words for your girl to hear with her heart. I hope I can speak bluntly. Please **share** this conscious training with your daughter along with your own instructions for leaving the nest. You may want to fly back to your own teen years with a ceremony for yourself, maybe with other Mothers, using *Soul Stories: Nine Passages of Initiation*, designed to help you remember this time filled with your own stories. The muse says, address the young woman between her two Passages; *First Blood* and *First Flight*.*





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Dear young woman: These suggestions, words between you and me, will help you build skills and stretch your brain to prepare for your own emancipation story. Write about what you think as you read. Everything you write will help you grow-up. Here are the teachings I offer lovingly, as an Elder with arms around you — Gail

Entelechy is a word that holds promise and potential: This is a Soul symbol.

This entelechy symbol represents the intersection where your inner potential becomes a reality. Follow along and your dreams will come true. One circle offers the cosmic rhythm of the Moon, which belongs to the Divine Feminine. The other circle holds the ancient teachings of Indigenous values. For sheer delight, I connect these circles together with colorful and strong silken threads. The threads, or secret insights, provide flexibility for your life design. Silk is strong enough to hold the unbidden forces coming into your body; you need to know about them.

The Grandmother in me sees like an Eagle far into the past and into the future. I want to wrap every fourteen year old girl in circles of silk. Imagine

this symbol, surrounded by multicolored threads, two circles meet and continuously flow one into the other. Secret insights are nestled among the silken threads. Choices and passions will lead you down a winding path of growth. Love each one of your decisions with all your heart. Silk is strong, earthy, and so are you my dear young woman: You need a design for your life to serve your long and amazing future ahead, all of your womanhood.

THE EAGLE'S VIEW

I sit in stillness with you. I acknowledge how hard and confusing this time feels. Insights to help you through your transformation ahead come from various perspectives. The most important is your own, carefully watch for changes; you are fluid at this time in your life. The next perspective closest to you is your Mother's. Watch how the concentric rings, just like a drop on a still pond, begin to build. Your closest girlfriends will be as fluid as you but also offer helpful perspectives on all kinds of things. Maybe the most valuable ring you could reach would be a circle of your friends together with all your Mothers.

Every woman alive went through this same biological metamorphosis from chrysalis to butterfly. It's mystical and magical. Colorful and strong silken threads bind circles within circles to remind you of your power. I offer thoughts about these two circles and their intersections to give you a place to begin your training. With a circle of Mothers, all of you together, will be able to expand and improve on these design ideas for your womanhood. Welcome to your womanhood training. Soon you will take flight.

FALLING WATER

Do you remember being a girl of ten and eleven who ran and played? She was a miracle and freely expressed her genuine wild Soul. We also remember our teen years right after that; for some of us, a paralyzing energy turned

that girl on her head. I wrap Elder arms around you, my dear young woman, and peer into your world. In this time between your First Blood and your First Flight, I offer my best wisdom for your developing womanhood. I turn this conversation to intimacy, like into-me-see.



Dazzling Light on Water — Like You

Let's begin with play and the importance of play all through life. Then, I will offer up the Moon teachings and la Luna's ways of revealing your inner life. Finally, I dish up the great news about your increasing brainpower, which will give you abilities to think for yourself and weigh risk. I will tell you about the nature of womanhood, timeless and forever true, to prepare you for leaving home. You can teach me too, I would like that. I know only a little about the details of your teen life and how you change your world every day. This is our starting place.

Many women stand beside me and we know all there is to know about womanhood. We offer a crystalline bridge, alluring, inevitable, and clear. To help you across this bridge, these insights will illuminate a design for your life that may serve you for decades. Think about that, an interesting workable foundation and a design for living, this is what we wish we had when we were your age.

Sure as falling water, you have grown in competence and confidence and have gathered secret, earthy clues that belong to you. Your big-girl-self has language skills, emotional awareness, keen observation, and a huge desire to explore the world. You have favorites: Quiet places in Nature, body-moves that feel wonderful—dancing, riding, skiing, skating, volleyball, soccer—and you have figured out how to survive the ridicule, rejections, and judgments of mean-girls at school. When you hear music you dance, you might even reach for instruments to jam.

In Nature, you can be led by the occupation of a bee into its tiny world to help gather flower pollen. When you eat food, you might delight in some new taste you would not touch as a child. Some girls discover the miracle inside of a seed and learn how to grow delicious food. Is this you?

How does your Soul whisper in your day-dreams and night-dreams? Have you completely outgrown your Middle Childhood time when you explored worldly wonders with wild abandon? What marvelous wonders belong to you now? What do you long for?

Soul is always a girl's companion and guides you to what you love most and all that belongs to you alone. Are you paying attention? Soul awakens gradually and begins to convey your purpose and reveal your destiny, bit by bit through your experiences. Your life path seems to emerge out of darkness, awakening from forgetfulness, wanting to show you the way. When you have an insight or an intuition, when you swoon over something you've always loved, this is your Soul tapping on your shoulder. Soul-purpose always relates to what you most love to do. Something occupies you so completely that time

disappears. This is why I begin with play, it's very Soul-full.

Your future—mysterious and unknowable—depends on a few foundation stones that you create. While still in your home nest, use the warmth and safety of home to play while you learn.

PURE PLAY, POOR PLAY

Life is playful, funny, and comic as often as it is serious and driven. Growing up is learning how to balance it all, so let's turn again to play. As you learn about the inner flow of intelligences—emotional, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and physical—play is the delightful ingredient to help you align with all that you love. Your creative juices need play to balance the serious nature of school. Explore everything that gives you joy; for you to thrive, remember what feels light and frivolous. You will always be rich if you have laughter.

I am a play specialist: I play with words, I play with my camera, I play with my dog, Rosie, and I get down and roll around in play with my granddaughter, Kestrel. Pure play has no hooks and no competition. You do not need to be first or best. Play can be solitary or with one or two others who absolutely love making up rules to suit the moment. Play improves relationships through kindness and love. Very often play involves art or invention. Find the crack between the worlds: Attend to what you love in play because the passion you feel comes from Source. Use play to discover your Soul and your purpose. This is the priority contract during high school.

Experience is beyond value but seems to be a secret. Your gift of experience when you feel light and playful and when you are deeply happy exploring the world, may be offered to a younger girl who would be happy to play with you. Reach one hand out to a younger who will value your experience while she helps you remember pure play; and reach your other hand out to an older woman whose experience you value. You now have the secret, use play. Building your life around playful relationships is primal and essential.



What do you most love to do? The primary clue that you are growing up nicely is when you nurture the relationships around you. Play will help you find your tribe. As a foundation stone, play shapes and defines you and offers the juice of life experiences through the burning fire of creativity. By playing with your heart you will also be shaping your future life.

My play Mentor, Joe Meeker, used to say, “Poor play,” with a great exhale.¹ He explained how the serious side of culture has forgotten play or discounts play as childish. Then he taught me this secret—play is life’s balancer and keeps you close to your Soul. Play is very active; so don’t confuse it with laying around, watching television. I immediately adopted these playful ideas and became a play specialist, and invite my women friends who love to play: Unplug! Come out! Let’s play! My life moved from surviving into thriving as fast as I could snap my fingers. I learned that play is an attitude as well as an activity. Everyone loves to make up rules. With practice, you can move through life in touch with your playful Soul.

GIFTS OF EVOLUTION

Evolution from girl to woman can be tricky waters to navigate. When your First Blood came along, maybe you and your friends hushed each other and you all allowed blood to dampen the extreme joy of being great girls together. Just after the swirl of hormones caused breast buds and then breasts, pubic fuzz and then hairy legs and underarms, another internal chemical blast comes from your body producing compounds to supercharge your brain. Around 14, a natural chemical cocktail swirls inside of you and floods you with confusion. You really want to know how to handle the muddle. I will show you how Moon tracking will teach you about your inner life. Great gifts will rise out of those muddy feelings.

Underneath your skin, your neuro-networks are busy evolving multiple intelligences. I hope you learned about those in elementary school,² the many ways of learning. The actions inside your body are unique to you; your particular heritage and gene pool holds triggers for different rates of maturity in you than in your friends. This is only part of the nature of individuation. How your identity is shaped depends on environmental forces, at home as well as time you spend in Nature; it depends on social interactions and on your psychological disposition. Every single day, change comes into you from one of these directions.

You might remember the life of a Turtle born of the Earth. Her Mother buries her before birth and emergence happens slowly. Gangs of little Turtles begin their journey in the comfort of the ocean—floating, exploring, playing. Being of two worlds, like teen women, each Turtle finds her way back from Mother Ocean to Mother Earth. When she does, her swirling confusion is gone. She has explored the depths, learned about herself, perfected play, and feels prepared to use the elements of Great Mother Earth to make the world a little more interesting, a little more playful, a little more beautiful. The similarities of a girl and a Turtle continue.

One gift all women share is the precious Moon. La Luna invites you to quiet all the way down when you bleed. Another gift, believe it or not, is

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emotional intelligence. Early to middle teen years are the training ground for your EQ (emotional quotient means emotional intelligence). Many books have been written about emotions, learn all you can. For as much as a million years and certainly the last hundred thousand years of evolution, your brain *begins* to mature at 14. A final and profound gift from the Ancestors, you receive a super-computer at this age that begins to network through your whole body. This neural network at your service for the rest of your life takes another ten years to completely develop. You feel the inner swirl where hormones—estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, and adrenalin—combine with brain chemicals—endorphins, epinephrine, and serotonin—to make your early teen years the most challenging time in life. What you are going through is so dramatic that every woman remembers because we have received these three gifts.

I give you permission to be a Turtle. Sit quietly on the Earth and focus inward.

WOMEN'S ALLY, LA LUNA



Train Your Brain to Follow the Moon

Probably many Moons have passed since your womb released your First

Blood. Now you feel practiced and maybe even regular. Discovering your personal rhythm takes some settling. When you look up, you will see a great number of Grandmothers who circle round you and all girls during Moontimes: We wish to tell you about your personal power and how you can find it, hold it, and expand it.

Rhythm is the reason for taking a personal retreat each month. I view life as a musical instrument dancing to 4:4 time. There are 4 seasons, 4 Moon phases, 4 winds, 4 directions, and 4 ways of being—introvert, extrovert, introverted extroverts, and extroverted introverts.³ Deep inside your genome map and the biomechanics of your body, 4 trillion human cells depend on change: Rhythm is one of the great secrets in life.

Our most visible and rhythmic indicator of continuous change is la Luna, the Moon, present and predictable, moving from the tiniest crescent through her First Quarter which shows a Half Moon overhead, to Full Moon and back around showing the other Half, growing gradually dimmer. Luna is always moving away from or towards the place called the Dark of the Moon. Before she is receptive of the Sun's light, she is dark and quiet. She offers mystery, lingering in darkness for three days before her tiny crescent shows again. At this dark place of incubation, before the New Moon actually shows herself, Luna's cycle begins again, renewed. New. Many women plant seeds or intentions for incubation during this place of darkness and then apply action to help those seed-thoughts grow. Luna mirrors your cycle. With attention, you can know yourself.

Before tracking your Blood cycle on your Moon chart, before you feel this rhythm, you will experience what I call settling. By settling I mean the process of learning before your understanding grows strong and trustworthy. Count day one of your Moon as the first day your Blood appears. On days 10 through 16, give or take one or two days, you can get pregnant all around your ovulation because your vagina produces mucus, which protects sperm. For up to six days, sperm can survive inside your body. You need to understand as all

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women do, but, no babies yet, not if you are 14, not until you decide when. This bluntness is meant to empower you.

Sacred Moon teachings have been saved and cherished from other cultures and other times when people lived a Village life. To update them, we surround you with streaming music, twinkling lights, hot tea, and colorful wraps. After a string of about 26 Moontimes or 2 years, your Blood serves as the catalyst for change and transforms you into a woman. In this time-tested rhythm, hormones meet brain chemicals, making your adjustment feel radical. Women emphasize Moon teachings so you will remember to honor yourself and enjoy your Moons the Women's Way in a monthly Vision Quest. This is our common practice.

We live in a fast moving culture but *women's practice* intentionally slows things down. Even on very full and busy days, attend to your Moon rhythm to slow down. Women's Ways go counter-culture like the Moon turns counter-clockwise; both highlight the desirability of slowing down. Moon teachings are much deeper and much older than anything else in culture. Using her ancient, ancient design, we weave this old Moon philosophy in a modern way. Your Moontime invites you to explore, la Luna guides you to unlock your personal knowledge.



Moon So Like You, Mysterious

Get to know la Luna. Sometimes I call her Grandmother Moon because my Ancestors did, she belongs to all women. The Moon serves as a guide and confidant for all women. With a rhythmic motion, Luna pulls on the Earth's waters drawing out the tides twice a day. Moving through her full cycle, Luna does the same with your Blood once a month. Each time you bleed, your Moon invites you to quiet down for your monthly Vision Quest.

Visioning and questing with the Moon is uniquely a woman practice. Take a personal retreat for yourself for as long as 4 days. Sleep, find new music, make art and ponder the immediate events of your life. Use your imagination to track each tiny egg all through her cycle. The presence of eggs is like having an inner Goddess; she may feel crampy, but only to get your attention. She is teaching you about self-care and revealing your inner world. Tracking all through your Moon-cycle will inform you and empower you. Soon you get to know and trust your yoni, your womb. She is the source of all your creativity and your ability to procreate. Allow your womb's connection to the Moon, the gorgeous bright orb in the sky, to illuminate your dreams and passions.



A Womb-stone Helps You Remember Your Foundation Stones

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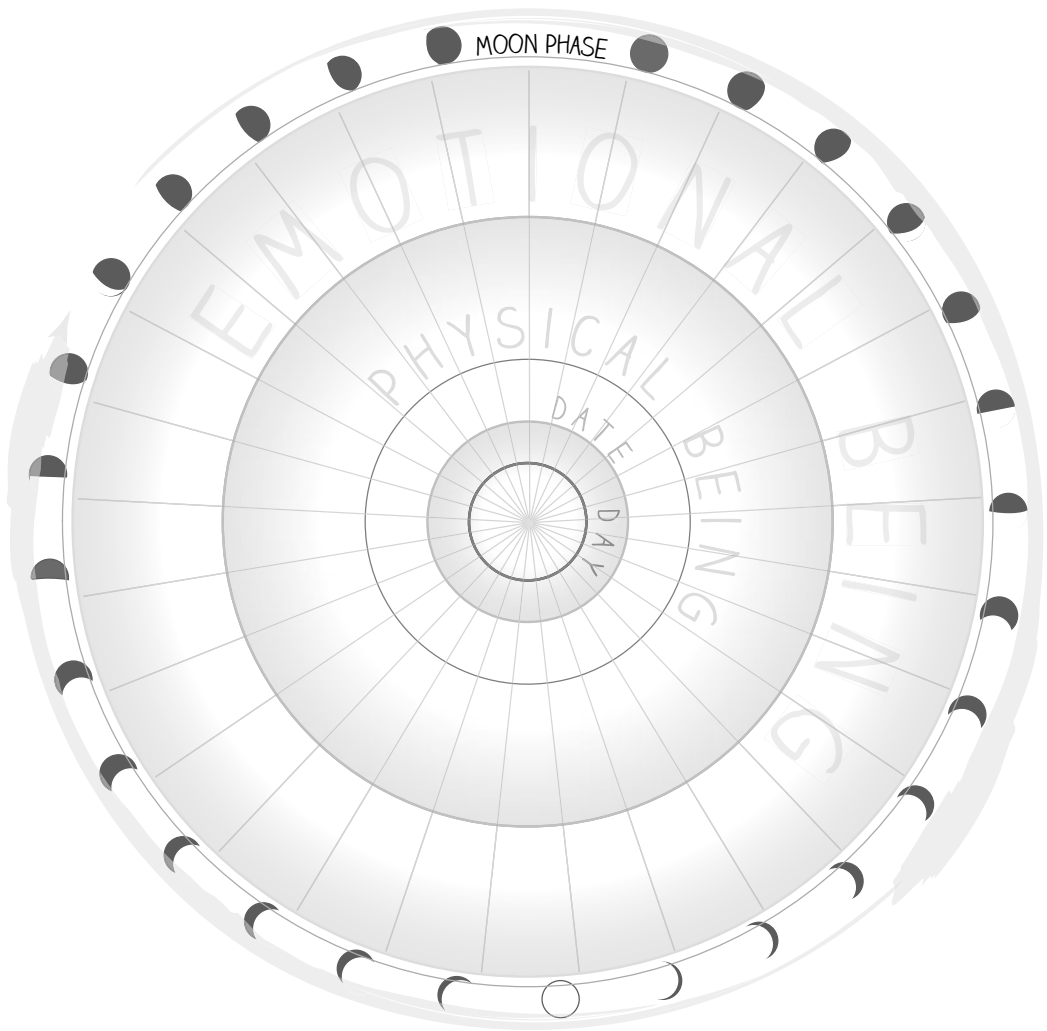
Turtle enters again. Feeling inviting, luscious, and mysterious, Turtle invites you to pay attention to your egg as it flows out of your body with its protective blood. This flow is precious and can nourish the Earth. Because your blood is life giving, you may sit, turtle-like, on the Earth and nourish Great Mother. The more you talk to your Mother and other-Mothers, your Aunties and Grandmothers, the more you will discover how other girls are changing their experiences of Moontimes.

Emphasizing *permission* delivers a big change to the old cultural norm. Women give you permission to experience deep visioning to call forth inner quiet so you might express your passions. Quiet is your personal power source. Every woman in my generation missed this in our teens, but we find quiet for ourselves now. In our high-speed culture, one of the emerging crises is great noise about time. Do not fall victim to this. You are the one in control. Carve out time; we give you permission to learn to think about your life's passions, Soul-work, and design your daily practices. This is the power piece that every woman longs for, permission to stop and enjoy a Vision Quest time.

Discover for yourself why I play with 4 as inspiration and guide. Follow these 4 practice steps:

- * Make notes on your Moontime worksheet every day.
- * Take a long Medicine Walk with the Moon on her New and Full days.
- * Use play and your art journal as your Soul connection.
- * Find deep quiet for visioning when you bleed.

These are 4 foundation stones. Play with them as your personal self-care guides. Go ahead.



MOONTIME WORKSHEET

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Copy your own Moontime Mandala from the back of the book or from www.ninepassages.com

Changing Moon provides you with a scaffold for self-examination. Your personal practice might begin with daily reflections: Every day, do a 10 minute check-in with la Luna, use this Moontime Worksheet or another Moon-tracking chart. Scan it, make copies, and share them with your friends, your cousins, and your sisters. Daily tracking of your inner world, your sanctuary of private thoughts and feelings, will introduce you to your deeper psyche. Over time your womb will become like an intimate confidant. Charting your moods and emotions throughout the month will guide you to know yourself and this thing called ego. In your quiet space, you will make friends with all of your inner parts. Read about anything that fires up your curiosity. This is a lifetime occupation, getting to know yourself and learning to hear your Soul messages.

THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE FACTOR

On the Moontime Worksheet, you will notice emotions cover the broadest swath for tracking. This is because women are blessed with the widest range of emotions and those can be tracked, as a way to self-knowledge. La Luna is women's helper. Plan ahead so you can devote hours to Nature connection, and especially during power-days, on the New and Full Moons. Whatever the wild swing of your moods and emotions, they can be improved with a walk. Walking as a wanderer where you're safe (please) feels playful, fills you with wonder, and will draw out your curiosity. We call this a Medicine Walk, time wandering away from the digital world and into the natural world. Walking in la Luna's rhythm will place you in cosmic time. She takes about a week from her New Moon phase to reach the First Quarter. Appearing to float through the Cosmos as a Half Moon, in orb geometrics, only a quarter of her surface is visible. In your planning, you may walk daily or match her rhythm of exaltation, and take a Medicine Walk in synch with la Luna's rhythm. Check your Moon calendar.

When you can carve out a time longer than your daily 10 minutes, open your art journal. A journal and art-materials become the go-to choice

for playful visioning whenever you feel like it. Be surprised by what emerges from you, the running story of the day or week or month may turn into a story to share. Multiple levels of knowledge become accessible to you when you share with another, when you hear words fall from your heart. Your Mother, your Mentor, a girl coming up, or a Grandmother, these are perfect listeners. Human brains are hardwired for storytelling and after playing in your journal, talking is your most important action step. Clarissa Pinkola Estés, an extraordinary storyteller, says, “I don’t know what I think until I see what I say.” Ask someone to listen to your inner discoveries.

With the resurgence of storytelling, I ask: Are the Ancestors reminding us of the strong evolutionary connection we had to the central fire we came from? You can deepen the power of your experiences by simply sharing your story. After enjoying your deep quiet personal rituals during each New and each Full Moon, adopt a practice of telling the stories la Luna teaches you about the profound connection between emotions and blood. Every young woman needs a confidant besides her womb, who is yours?

Look back over the past month, was it all you wished it to be? Look ahead to the next month, what is your holiest and highest intention? Paying attention to the Moon is paying attention to yourself: Allow her four stages to shape the chrysalis of your inner life. Something inside wants to come out. What is it?

WHY RETREAT

Radical acts of self-care will teach you more of your body’s sacred nature and how much there is to love about deep kindness. This is pure invention, Dearheart. Not one of us will tell you what, this is for you to decide: Whatever feels good to your heart, your spirit, and your body, do that. Self-judgments slowly begin to fall away when you practice compassion by giving yourself time. Judgments that began early in puberty will begin to dissolve when you discover more about your inner beauty. A profound friendship and loyalty will

replace self-loathing with inner power. Liking yourself as your own best friend is one sign of maturity.

Self-care for your body envelops more than your body of course, this is woman's essential secret. By caring for yourself, remember to include your emotions, your spiritual self, your cognitive self, even your playful self. This is survival advice; there are plenty of moments ahead that could potentially feel very lonely. Being lonely, as in discontent with your own company, can be a real bummer. Break through with talking therapy, workout therapy, and share emotional experiences—even negative ones—to feel better. Learn and practice self-care; it's one of the most essential habits to learn before you leave the nest. Living fully and wholly, you will find the sacred in everything. Everything that feels nurturing—yoga, massage, manicures, brisk walking, gardening, and Nature explorations—can be experienced solo or shared with your Mother or Mentor.



Two Words Naturally Go Together: Ritual and Play

A woman's practice uses the energy of intention to create worlds within worlds. Your greatest inner power peaks when your Blood releases, the veil between the dimensions grows gossamer thin. Inspiration comes through easily

in the quiet of your Moontime practice so you may commune directly with your Soul. Listening in the deep quiet of Nature or the corner of your bedroom, you will feel, hear, and appreciate how intuition guides your dreams. This is peak time for creativity. Review your Moon chart with your highs and lows. Your outer power peaks during ovulation. You want to be out in the world doing many things. Even the busy-ness of your life deserves a little quiet to listen inside. Intuitive messages can be missed if the noise in your head ignores any part of this sacred, treasured women's power practice.

Shedding one egg and then the next offers you a design that revolves around the Moon and your month. Women are brilliantly designed, egg-by-egg to work and play and check-in using both. Inside this design, a bridge from month to month has been illuminated. Your greatest discoveries wait for you in rest and retreat. The first days of your Moontime you have the opportunity to explore the details of your life design; using clues from your heart-dreams, you can plan how to build something. What adventures call to you? Have you filled your heart with Nature? Do you want to build a strong body? The deep quiet of your Moontime offers this ever unfolding treasure: You exploring your mind and your Soul.

La Luna holds the seeds of your creativity. She teaches you about you, about harmonizing with cosmic time and natural flow. What you feel depends on other factors, like your home and school environments and how well you have developed emotional intelligence for yourself. When my mood swings, my family becomes vigilant. Deeply personal discoveries sometimes beg to be shared. I have discovered how my Moon in Aries works with the other cosmic forces, the Sun and planets, to affect the energies of my emotions. This is complex, but I keep learning by observation and study. Gifts from the Cosmos are not part of the emotional intelligence found in books.

Our great Mother Earth is one of the heavenly planets. See for yourself, look up *My Orrey* on YouTube⁴ and you will learn how Earth, one of the many planets spinning around our day star, the Sun, rotates as a heavenly body. To

advance your personal development, what else is there but discovery, growth, and joy in this great spiritual adventure?

Of course! Love emerges through discovery, I love being in heaven on Earth. I love being in a state of love. I love knowing about the planets and la Luna, all of them have taught me so much about myself. I circle you back to emotional intelligence. Using your emotions, especially love, to learn about yourself will provide you with facts and lead you to higher use of your brain. As promised, your platinum brain power begins to arrive at age 14, and will be discussed in a few pages.

GOOD MEDICINE: THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE

Two fat circles seem to dance, side by side. The rhythmic cycle of your Moontime chart meets a second circle, called the Circle of Courage. I call their meeting place *entelechy*, the force of good. I line up your Moon chart with this circle of good medicine because both have round natures and beautiful synchronicities. Each supports the other. Together they help you evolve your potential into reality.

A Medicine Wheel is a circle divided into four parts and all parts are equal in emphasis and necessary for wholeness. Spirals and layers of ancient meanings of good medicine can be found in the wheel, including the 4 winds, the 4 seasons of life, even power animals. Medicine Wheel symbolism and teachings are old, old like Moon teachings. Ancient wisdom has been carried by Indigenous peoples all around the world. Watching taught these people and can teach you too, my beautiful Turtle.



Four More Foundation Stones

Inside this Circle of Courage⁵ that I show here are 4 big ideas waiting for your embrace. These words will enable you to focus your attention on growing up, and after the rage of hormones and brain chemistries settle down, these ideas will lead you to balance and wholeness. The 4 big concepts inside your Circle of Courage are **Belonging**, **Mastery**, **Independence**, and **Generosity**.

Belonging rises out of our spirits. Look within, you know when you do and when you do not belong, you sense it, you feel it. This sense is an emotional intelligence, a knowing that begins at Birth. To explain Belonging requires warmth, comfort, and positive feelings of home. Belonging to the Earth as our Mothership and other-Mother offers values like awe, sacred, unity and playfulness to deepen this knowing, I belong.

The action of belonging is a simple embrace, relationships work two

ways, making kinship with others. Belonging is the psychic key to being, when you feel love and attachment to family and friends, you understand how kinship and loyalty are connected.

Psychologists love this word attachment; many social theories spin on how well you bond in your relationships. Lining up with the East on the Medicine Wheel and with Birth on the Spiral of Nine Passages, belonging is a personal value to practice with those you love that will enrich every single day of your life. Focus on deepening connections with those who love you.

Moving through good medicine, **Mastery** is a whole concept to occupy your teen years. More than anything in the world—what do you want more of or want to know more about? Answering this will bring you closer to mastery, especially if you persist to get the answer. What is uniquely yours to give the world? In the body and spirit explorations that created your ‘great girl’ between Middle Childhood and puberty, your curiosities revealed a few early passions. Beyond puberty, your dreams begin to rise like yeast bread and grow. Passion, a thread from your Soul which can nag through your intuition, must be pursued because this directly aligns you with your Soul working through your dreams. One of my Coyote Mentors calls this Genius,⁶ and I do too, it’s the place where your dreams meet your Soul. Michael Meade says. “Every person is a genius at being yourself.”

Even believing this, you may need to ask for support to follow your dreams. Without reservation, I define mastery as your alignment with the cosmic rhythm of time. Ten thousand hours of devotion to one or two passions will build the foundation for all of life. This is a lengthy devotion to yourself. Even if you have to sleep with this mantra: *What do I want? What do I want?* Your answers will float to the surface because your inner Genius is the passion that lives in what you love. At this South direction and First Blood on the Spiral, you discover clues to your future by reaching for mastery.



Between the Dark and the Light—Independence

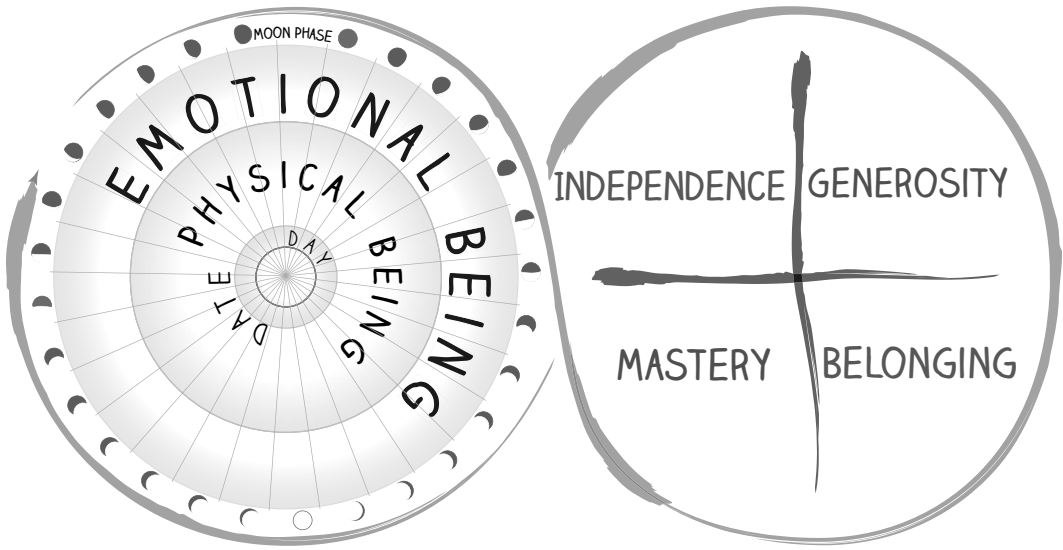
This metaphor is growing in strength: By the time the Moon comes to Fullness, the third concept, Independence, naturally appears as a reward. This circle is now becoming value-laden. Independence includes two interacting values that cascade like falling water. Where self-discipline and self-responsibility intersect, this cross-point creates independence. To find support and encouragement for your independence, hang out with adults who model and discuss values—risk assessment, decision making, and responsibility—to build your confidence and honor. Out of deep discussions, you will begin to feel competent to take up the challenge to make decisions and use inner discipline to create your own challenges. This will give you just a glimpse into your future where you will next reach for the Womanhood Bloom Passage on the Life Spiral. When you act consistently and realize mistakes are wonderful teachers, you will begin to feel a growing sense of independence. Action builds self-esteem and experience and feels exhilarating.

Generosity completes the Circle of Courage and like the Moon in her final Quarter, her waning stage, giving back has a personal flavor. Generosity includes caring, attention, and empathy, which arise when you share time with others. When you practice a rhythm of generosity, you start to feel more and more worthy. When your feelings of worth gain traction, you eliminate lack and the need for a therapist at the same time. By learning that giving is equal to receiving, and for emphasis, receiving is equal to giving, your heart unlocks the secret of good relationships. Your reward is a higher personal regard.

Although accumulative changes turn you into a woman, this enormous and remarkable metamorphosis from chrysalis to butterfly does happen gradually. You never have to know it all. Human evolution begins to flower in you as your great gift of change between 12 and 18. This is the first half of adolescence. No other six years contain such drama or cohesive energy as your early emotional and intellectual systems integrate with social and sensory systems.

YOUR ENTELECHY: THE FORCE FOR GOOD

By giving yourself deep quiet and time to pursue your thoughts and discover your dreams, you can actually watch your thoughts take form. This is known as entelechy, a vital force directing the growth of your life. Entelechy moves heart-thoughts from potential, as in a dream, to actual, as in a thing. Entelechy is part of your Soul, teaching you things through thoughts. Blend these vital heart-dreams to create a good design for your life in any way that feels right for you.



Look Again: Entelechy is Your Moontime + Your Skillset ©2016

The Genius in your Soul causes a thought to grow into an action and take shape as a thing; that is entelechy in action. Through entelechy, what you dream comes true. Like baking, you simply blend: Form an intention, create a plan, and add action. This is your silk thread! Very often you will need to ask for help.

The intersection where the Moon helps you track your inner potential to make something happen seems like magic, but look around you. Women constantly make things happen, make things appear out of practically nothing. Begin to notice others' process, ask them about how they manifested their dreams. Entelechy is this force inside of them and inside of you.

Follow the silk thread for a minute. Go with the flow of your cycle and wrap your heart around the 4 Indigenous values that are important for teen focus: **Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity.** A force of personal courage begins to rise inside of you. This is entelechy, your very personal and very vital force. Now you know more about life design than I did when I turned 30!

I have a little story: Just before I turned 16, I suffered the death of my best friend. My sophomore year was filled with grief. The following summer,

my parents sent me to my California grandparents for six weeks and I returned supercharged. I picked boysenberries with my Grandmother and attended the short summer session at Modesto Junior College with my older sister. At the beginning of my junior year, I announced that I would graduate from high school early, as a junior, and I did. How did this happen so easily? It was only a thought from the berry patch, but I held onto it, tracked the potential of it, made a dream out of it every day through all the Moontimes of my junior year. Those two things—time with Grandmother and with higher learning—built a fire in my belly and the day-dreaming was Divine, as from God. You can do anything you dream, when you learn to track with your inner potential, your entelechy.

PLATINUM BRAIN POWER

Fourteen is a peak age of undeniable complexity in ontogenesis. That's the fancy word for the biological timing when your hard drive finally arrives: Your adult brain. This new and better than gold, platinum brain power, begins to download at age 14 and never stops.



Play with Ritual: Learn about Your Soul

Let's unpack this complexity: Your female hormones now meet your new brain chemistry. While you might long for your former light, playful child-self, you discover a new longing at the same time. You long to be grown up and be

treated as a woman, you long to make your own choices and your own mistakes. Your brain has just expanded to adult size and power, but you haven't yet learned how to use it. As a self-defense mechanism, you must act like you have it together. Simultaneously, you feel and see a new awareness with your inner sight. When you lay on your bed or on the Earth, you wonder about the presence you have begun to sense. She is like a regal watcher; your essential and mysterious Soul awakens on a higher platform, like up in the tree-tops.

This gift of Soul has been quiet since Birth. For a few, the inner companion awakens in Middle Childhood, but Soul becomes an urgent force when the adult brain arrives. Now, especially when you sit in the quiet of your Moontime, or you float awake out of your dreamtime, or you enjoy the silence in Nature, you can feel the presence of Soul. You deserve to explore your Soul's inner nature. For Soul explorations, deeply immerse yourself in what you love. Beginning to feel masterful, use your Vision Quest time. How you use this gift of quiet will shape your life. Before you leave home and take your First Flight at age 17 or 18 or 20, your cosmic clock delivers another 50 Moons when Blood comes to quiet you and help you connect to your Soul and what you love.

Learn how to track emotions and compulsions that feel scattered and undirected. When you really learn self-love, judgments and criticisms dissolve back into pure exploration. Every woman has many facets, so do you as the youngest among us. Some of us run helter-skelter, wanting to polish a dozen passions at once. The entire world needs to be explored and you, with the high privilege of having a home nest, you deserve to fall into endless, timeless joy with your explorations. When parents provide a home they intend for you to shape your identity, discover what you love, and use every opportunity to become strong and resilient enough to fly from the nest and thrive.



Play with Meditation, Make it Yours

MAKING INTENTION SACRED

A practice of deepening meditation begins at 14 when the gift of human evolution offers you the brain power to consider the abstract. Learn to be very Turtle-like, basking in the Sun. Dare yourself to unplug. Find quiet inside your mind. As you begin to practice meditation, quiet mind seems rather abstract. Entering the realm of your mind to meditate, you find your mind quick and noisy with thoughts, so looking for quiet can be frightening. Try laughing at this monkey of a mind and begin again. Many of the wise, experienced meditators say, “Follow your breath, in and out.”

With persistence you will soon succeed. Meditation is rest for your busy mind. Follow your breath in and out. I like to light a candle to set the mood. You could ask for help, find a woman who knows about meditation, perhaps a yogini will become your ally. On-line, Sally Kempton or Pema Chodrin⁷ are both master teachers who offer help for you to begin a meditation practice. When meditation is over, even ten minutes each day, growing to twenty minutes twice a day, you will quickly notice how fired up you feel. Your brain likes rest. Circle back to your Turtle self.

Just out of your deep state of meditation, pay close attention to your intuition—each message delivers gifts from your Soul. In your Vision Quest time when you bleed, focus on the messages of your heart-dreams. During your Moon is the most excellent time to become relaxed and practiced with meditation. Sometimes, in barely discernable whispers, you will receive reminders of what you love most, which gifts are yours alone. Singly or several woven together, your gifts deserve to be cultivated, in fact it's what the world is waiting for.

Gifts rise from quiet, like a dream floating out of the mist, when you commune with the deepest part of your Soul. From there your sacred intentions find their power in entelechy because they arise from the quiet potential in your heart. Dreams begin to manifest, step by step, egg-by egg.

IDENTITY AND RISK

While the Earth turns 2000 day-to-night rotations, your consciousness expands with the help of your wild self and your tame self. Identity formation finds the balance between your wild and tame extremes while you physically mature. In the cultural view of early and middle adolescence, a chasm opens as wide as the Grand Canyon and many people just label it chaos. Girls cast off labels, as should you. What is really going on?

If identity is the puberty project, chameleon energy is the game that delights you and your peers. This chameleon game causes you to experiment, so you're one way with family, another way with teachers, and yet a whole new way with your peers. These different ways you invent make you feel talented, secretive, and wild. Sometimes, you literally change every day, which can be exhausting, but you can also see through this to the other side. Deep down, you know the world is a stage and you are the lead actress. Soon one true self will emerge and you will like her.

In adolescence you align with a wide array of risks and need someone to tell you the truth about risk. Your Mom has been trying, but it's hard to listen

when she loves you so and spins a positive twist at the same time she points to danger ahead. Who is the person who will tell you the truth and who will you listen to deeply? I am not kidding, risks are those things with consequences, hard to see and often dangerous. The cultural risks that involve your body and easy to name, like substance abuse and sexual experimentation, carry hidden costs that you cannot yet understand so parents and teachers hold out punishments for them. I am going to teach you how to weigh and understand risk so you can decide for yourself. You and I intend to prevent the psychological damage that can cause scars for life.

You have already learned to keep yourself safe from harm. Some of that, knives, scissors, fast moving cars and bicycles, even extreme sports, skateboarding and skiing, have taught you about risk. Early and Middle Childhood filled you up with experiences—if you were like me—you have needed more than one trip to the emergency room already.

Learn advance risk assessment now, like you are parenting yourself. Ask these questions about potential harm: What trouble lurks? Who takes the lead? How would anyone be harmed? What penalties will result and what are my personal consequences? Is death a penalty? Is jail a penalty? Are my moral standards involved? Weighing risk, would I choose the same friends? Besides my body, what other parts of me might be harmed? Can my spirit be harmed?



Ask a Tree to Be Your Witness

Develop a two-column chart, list “do this” (pro) on one side and “don’t” (con) on the other side. Now, being totally honest with yourself, answer each one of those questions. Sorry if this pros and cons list seems adult-like behavior. Even from your point of view, risk assessment is all about keep-

ing yourself safe, which is very adult-like. This will also teach you to use your adult brain and learn to think. The last question is about who: Have I thought about who cares? How do my actions ripple out to others?

Learn to weigh risk successfully and you will have more control of the inner and outer parts of your life. With risk assessment, your potential for harmony in relationships will increase and you will begin to think like a woman. Honestly, this is the conversation that parents long for so be proactive. Every successful transition from early adolescent to the middle where you have more control includes asking yourself: What is my risk and how does it show up for me? Risk weighing, the analysis of choices and decisions, light up like signs of maturity.

THE WITNESS

Over time, women acquire tricks that might be useful during and after high school, so why not learn them now? The first two tricks are mindfulness and resiliency, slightly different techniques for mastering the ability to absorb the little and big shocks of every day. You are all too familiar with inner turmoil, and you know about contrary energies that you receive from peers, teachers, and even your parents sometimes. Resiliency is your innate ability to bounce back and to recover a calm, tranquil state. As an internal energy which you can trust and strengthen with your mind, resiliency is a bounce-back energy that works very well with mindfulness. Many people, who focus on the intersection of mind and body where you think and feel, teach that mindfulness is a way of training your mind to pay attention to the present moment only. Both resiliency and mindfulness are abilities to handle stress caused when your mind judges things as negative even before they happen. A little saying: Be mindful and kind to yourself rather than judgmental and critical. This is self-care.

To remain upright through life's storms, knowledge comes to your aid. Follow routine and automatic behaviors may lull you into a sleepwalking state. You can learn to *pay attention*, even if you write this on your hand for a few days. If you forget, you fall back into mindlessness. Paying attention only to

the present moment, being mindful, you are more sensitive and open to surprise. Most of all, practicing mindfulness avoids mindlessness. This is a big duh! Huh? It came from Dr. Ellen Langer,⁸ she is the Mother of Mindfulness. I tell you this because I want to quote one tip she offers: “Today, identify three things you don’t like about yourself. What is the positive version of each of these traits? Can you reframe what you don’t like to create a more positive interpretation of your qualities and traits? For example, are you ‘slow’ or merely contemplative? Are you ‘impulsive and rash’ or simply spontaneous? Are you ‘obstinate’ or determined and tenacious?”

Oh, how I love that reframing. This is emotional intelligence at work. Paying attention to each moment, mindfulness, twisted around an attitude of resiliency, gives you control over the ups and downs that come from interacting with all other people. When something or someone—even you—knocks you off-center, these two energies, mindfulness and resiliency, work together to return you back to your center with much less stress or anxiety. Reframing is a great strategy for mean-girls, too. Play their game with kindness and playfulness. Many an old Mother has said this: “Confuse your enemies with kindness.”

With practice, you discover that you can trust yourself more when you engage with all that is happening in the moment in front of your eyes. Even blame dissolves when you let go of past hurts. Trust is the reward of paying attention to your inner knower and her witness. This expands your emotional intelligence. You have built-in capacities for paying attention to the moment and for witnessing your own actions and reactions. This is part of consciousness and identity. Practicing mindfulness will bring you peace.

What are you trusting? Yourself? Your connection to all that is? Consider what happens when you awaken your mind in every part of your body. Can you be a tuning fork for the Universe? Perhaps there is much more to trusting yourself as you are an integral part of the whole. Yes, God and Goddess would agree with me. Trust turns into faith with practice, be your own witness. Prove this to yourself.

Ellen Langer, as I have introduced, has worked the past 40 years leading the research in mindfulness. She has spent her adult life combining and recombining questions to bring this gem to our attention: Mindfulness. One summary statement goes like this—all of our problems, personal, interpersonal, professional, and societal stem either directly or indirectly from mindlessness. Noticing more is an antidote to boredom. I love knowing this is true because I really dislike those times when I feel bored or boring!

Your inner witness reminds you that you already know a great deal. Sometimes you don't even know how you know things. Being mindful, not zoning out, gathers up all your past experience so you can learn more from each moment. Challenge yourself to acquire these tools and they will be yours. Best of all, tools like meditation and Moon retreats are free. Encourage your antennae to stretch and grow. Your wise inner self and witness are always present and will offer up this advanced wisdom anytime you reach for it.

Gain control and take charge of yourself before your 15th birthday. For this to happen, practice mindfulness and demonstrate accountability. You want this and I want this for you. By staying close to the light side, your passions will begin to line up.

NATURE, ALWAYS THERE FOR YOU

While you remain in the nest, the time from 14 through 17+ contains 1500 days for play and learning. Nature connection began when you were a wee baby imprinted with furry bumble bees and fluttering butterflies. Your heart connection to Nature becomes more important through your teen years. My friends remind me that time in Nature brings solace, smooths the edges in our emotional bodies. Nature is a gift you give yourself.

Summer and winter I am a tracker, paying attention to who shares my world. I call these the tracks of the sacred Others, because I seldom see the critters, but I like knowing they are there. Seeing fresh tracks means I have

company. Connection to everything in the natural world deepens our feelings of belonging. Learning about ecology will anchor your place in the Cosmos. Change is rolling through all of Earth's environments and seems to be speeding up and must be embraced.

I like the image of an ecosystem pictured as an intricate spider's web delicately swinging in the breeze. Every tree, every animal, every bird, every little plant, every water particle, everything is connected by that web. Everything is related. Like you in the center, all of it is delicate. You are related to each one of these parts and your life depends on knowing all you can learn about how relationships and interdependence works. All these ecosystem pieces belong to the Earth, often called Gaia from Greek mythology for the Great Mother Goddess. Luckily you have at least six senses to enjoy Gaia's gifts. Your senses will help you locate your gift for Gaia.

With a little sensory practice, you can learn the perspective of our First People here on Turtle Island, their name for North America. We are all related. We are all one, an intricate part of the whole of life on Earth. When you know in your Soul that you are related to everything you lay eyes on, your perspective changes.

Consider how your senses work together: When you blend sight with hearing both become infinitely more powerful. Blending senses is one way of strengthening all of them and to feel the connection they need to be strong. This requires a "dirt time."⁹ Simply stated, dirt-time is your regular devotion to going outside, to firing up your curiosity, kissing the Earth with your bare feet, and moving as you are one with Earth's magic. What you receive is belonging, balance, and outrageous joy. Let's begin a campaign to give back to Earth for all she gives to us; I like the idea of Gifts for Gaia. What can you feel inspired to do for this Great Mother who will hold you all the days of your life?

FINALE: WRAP THE BUNDLE



Transformation is Complete

Maybe you can feel my great gratitude for the evolutionary force that makes leaving home possible. With all the preparations of the last couple of years, you know now that you are ready to leave home; your knowing is driven by an urge for new ordeals. When this first half of adolescence is complete, with it goes most of the drama of change. Your butterfly wings are dry and tested. The second half of adolescence is harder, this is true, but you have secret tools that no other generation of women has bundled together.

You have a rhythm to watch your changes through your Moontimes and through the Circle of Courage. I want you to feel comfortable with entelechy, your inner power, but that comfort comes through practice. Endurance and resilience have been part of these early years of adolescence: You learned about yourself and your passions, you learned about risk assessment and gained appreciation for your super-charged adult brain power. Like the day a baby bird leaves her nest, you will always remember the day you fly on your own.

Now you are ready to receive blessings from your Mentors, the Aunties

and the Elders. More than ever, you need a supporting cast to hold the nest while you fly away. Invite everyone who helped you.

I advise you to simply ask for a very special Rites of Passage ceremony. Invite all of the women who have been your supporting cast and turn the ritual over to them to create. Each woman will offer a piece important to your ceremony. Set a firm date so that you and your Mother can take a breather. By simply exploring your inner desires with these women friends, a Rites of Passage will be designed just for you. They have been your community, the generations ahead of you in age and stage who have pioneered their own lives. Ask them to include an away place, a challenge, and a means to bundle your story up to now.

A DRUM-ROLL PLEASE

Leaving home begins with the drumbeat of consciousness. Primary self-parenting means you hear the inner voice of moral authority before making a major choice. I love the model of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.¹⁰ First you need food, water, and shelter. These needs are so real that creativity will often engage every fiber of you to solve them. Your drumbeat quickens around age 16 and allows time for expression and discussion. The drumbeat of your Soul may send you exploring the practical possibilities of early autonomy, a beautiful word for self-sufficiency or independence.

We could honestly fill another chapter for your womanhood training if we included body image, relationships, sexuality, wild-within adventures in Nature, musical intelligence, personal rituals, more about self-care, brain health, more about emotional intelligence, social graces, chakra music, sensory awareness, meditation, compassionate self-parenting, religious intelligence and peacemaking. These were all on my Elder-friends' lists of most prized knowledge before leaving home. This list is yours to use, to begin conversations. You will find the intersections of experience and research which will ignite another layer of curiosity. You will learn things by asking that will help you with real life

experiences. Your action step involves taking the time to ask what others think and feel. Dear Fledgling, each woman has learned about these headliners and we will talk anytime you ask.

On the Life Spiral, each Passage includes dozens of birthday ceremonies and holiday celebrations that add great joy to a whole life. First Flight is Passage No. 4 and includes the bundle of everything that came before. Assembling the parts and pieces for this ritual begins with a review from Birth and moves experimentally and experientially through Middle Childhood Rites and First Blood celebrations. If you experienced those earlier ceremonies, my heart is glad.

Just in case you draw a blank on ritual: A Rites of Passage ceremony is perhaps the oldest ritual on Earth, and is now returning to the culture. Your initiation ceremony is a dramatic catalyst of change that shows your people you have reached the end of one stage of development.

Bundling experience all of your challenges and ordeals from age 12 to this Passage now provides an honoring for your life. To perform a ritual requires a quiet state of mind, a space made sacred with your thoughts and actions. It's good to light candles to invite ambience. Treat your senses to incense, to colorful fabric for an altar, smudge for cleansing, photos in memory of yourself, poetry you love, bells, music, drums, and rattles. Each ritual item honors you and elevates you into an altered state of being. Initiation "reveals yourself to yourself," in the words of Michael Meade.¹¹ Do your bundling then let go. Your supporting cast will create a ceremony that honors all your early days. Time stands still for moments while you respect the memories of all of your joys, all of your trials, and all of your dreams so far.

For every woman, ritual draws from her personal ancestral well of experience. Those are the foundational pieces for this ceremony. I always add Mugwort to invite the dreams of life and Prairie Sage to invite the Ancestors. Trust your supporting women, they know what to do.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of wrapping your bundle. You will carry this honor through all of your life. The ceremony will be regal and powerful and you will flow into the next decade like falling water.

THE STORY OF DIVERSE FLEDGLINGS

More than a thousand million graduation parties are held every year; we live in that storied landscape. I offer this story because it lives in me; my Soul truly understands how it colors my perspective. This First Flight ceremony is the rarest in my personal experience, but I have helped create two Fledgling ceremonies ten years apart. I am only the common thread in each young woman's story of their Passage from the first half of their adolescence into the second half.

Dee came into my life first, just as she turned 10 years old. I observed that hope lived in her spirit in a way that seemed eternal, often that was all she had. As a teen-age girl with big check marks in most at-risk categories, she still held onto hope. I was her 'big sister' for two-and-a-half years, and then I was her advocate. Finally, after she had traveled a long, long road of trials, I became her foster Mother for her senior year in high school.

In the middle age of our lives, my new husband and I jumped through the hoops to move Dee from Colorado to Idaho sending shock waves through us and our relationship. Dee had the hardest time adapting, because she had been in 15 different group homes in 5 years and survived a fostering system that controlled her with drugs. She was almost feral and certainly angrier than a caged animal. As part of her commitment to come drug free to our home, she had refused her medications for two months. My constant questions were: How could we use one little year to fill in so many developmental gaps? How could I give her all that she needed?

When it came time to fledge her, the ticking of a clock was the indicator rather than experience or maturity. She was half a year past 18 and needing to

go. I had taught her to drive, she had successfully interned at the local animal shelter, and she needed more, probably more than anyone could give her. Dee and I walked the neighborhood and talked about life. She needed to experience for herself. She was about to walk out on the gangplank into the school of hard knocks and I was going to push her.



Introducing Kanga, Formerly Dee / Deirdre on her Gangplank—She Called it Emancipation

A very nice dinner party lavished gifts on her that she had no way to value. She needed a car since we lived in rural Idaho. Dee needed a computer because her first step on her own was to check into the dorm of a small college. In no way could we fill in her great need for love and belonging or for the social graces in relationships. Only she could find her intelligences emotional, spiritual, and motivational.

Basically, we breathed uneasily when my husband and I released Dee to her dorm room. For one year, only one year, we had treaded lightly with each other and learned about resiliency in our spirit-selves. We did let go, that was what everyone needed.

Rebellion and confusion made the next couple of years a real challenge for Dee. Stories of her escapades floated to us along the mysterious grape-

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vine of social connectedness. She struggled mightily to keep herself upright. Whenever she felt hopeful and positive, she would call and give me news. Those hard years made her stronger and resiliency is part of her core strengths now. I feel very grateful she stayed connected to me, she is a big part of my personal story.



An Earth Momma, Always Offering Her Heart, Always Helping Everybody

In the middle of her crucial teen life, I wrote a graduate essay on how resilient she was throughout her experiences in all those group homes. That resiliency which she had earned blended inexplicably with her inner spirit, the fire of hope, so now ten years later, Dee is upright and doing very well. She provides a snug little home for champion dogs and laying hens. She reads voraciously and is a culinary wizard. Always a night owl, she has liked working the night shift.

Another Threshold has appeared for Kanga and with her whole heart she is stepping up to training as a foster parent. In a new place, a new life and new job, she uses joy for her fuel. I find the light in her voice encouraging and her hope infectious. I love this relationship and include her in my prayers.

Maybe in our humble strivings, we can make a difference in another's life. This was all I ever dared to ask for, that I could make a difference. I know that love has been the bridge between a young girl and me, almost 40 year's difference gets stuffed with laughter, tears, understanding, and so many prayers that begin with Wow.

PRACTICING RITUALS

Ten years later, another teen named Maya came to me and asked for help. I was more than happy to provide her with a college prep writing class where we worked closely together for six months. In a home school/on-line accreditation system, she added this class to her credits. Maya found tremendous inner strength in applying discipline and working hard to please her inner critic. She wrote for herself and I merely supplied a rudder.

A beautiful woman's ceremony 'wrapped the bundle' for her Rites of Passage to send her far away from home. Elders, Aunties, and Maya's Mother designed an overnight retreat for Maya to serve her in memory all through the transformative first year out of the nest. First, our celebration circled around food, which is always superb at women's gatherings.

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A Gathering of Women and our Symbols to Gift Maya a Box of Love Notes

Maya loved the feast and was very surprised by the temple we created for separation and an altered state of being. Mother told her Birth story and journey as heart-companion to Maya's Soul from Birth to now. I really liked giving the stage and the spotlight to Maya, the bud of a new woman, but I scared her by telling her to come prepared. Everyone enjoyed hearing about highlights and ordeals and how Maya wrapped her life inside a story. Aunties and Elders listened carefully and wrote on sticky notes. One by one, as all of her Mentors mirrored highlights back to Maya, we carefully wrapped her story into a small, wooden, gift box and offered accolades to Mother.

This initiation ritual still feels amazing to each of us women. The Divine Feminine in our different offerings blossomed into a beautiful flower. We didn't talk about what to do or rehearse; we allowed ritual practices to flow out of us and harmonize. The glorious high point of Maya's Rites of Passage ritual resulted in a Soul-filled bundle of storylines and affirmations. Inside her gift box, each one of our sticky notes traveled away with Maya, our newly

fledged young woman, to keep her company throughout the year while her transformation completed itself.

There are many ways to bring a ceremony like this to a close, but usually a test of wits, a swim across the pond, a blindfold walk to the sound of a drum, even a string walk would be a small demonstration of the ordeals ahead that she will encounter alone. Saying adios to an old self provides an initiate with a little “d” for death; a ceremony could include some of that flavoring.

We could not locate a blindfold, so Maya’s jacket literally wrapped around her head like a turban. In that dark place she felt drowsy and warmed. Her two nearest and dearest Aunties took her to the bottom of the road and let go. They guarded the edges and told Maya to follow the drum. When she finally came to the fire we sang songs and then everyone went skinny dipping, ate too much pie, and fell into deep slumbers. Symbolism of finale happened in the morning with henna paint that marked her change amidst great giggles.

Maya flew from her comfortable home nest and once in college wrote an essay about her experience.

Here are her expressive words:

Driving home, I told my Mom how grateful I was for all of the time and planning she had devoted into my Rites of Passage ceremony. Although there were no physical differences besides the henna when I was reintroduced into society, I was spiritually and mentally impacted. I value my bond with my Mom and I know the ceremony helped prepare me for my solo journey away from home. I am the only person I know out of my friends who was given the gift of a Rites of Passage ceremony and I want to carry on this tradition to my children. I am my Mother’s daughter inside and out and I know I will carry her teachings with me wherever I am.

I love my Momma.

Like Maya, each of the women in the Circle felt the ceremony flow from our hearts and form a memory essence that remains with us, sweet and enduring. To close out the first transformational year away from home, the

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formality and long preparation of a Vision Quest could function nicely to close the portal. The symbolic Death of the former self and final grieving for those ‘nest years’ could give a stamp of a formal closing for the whole Passage. This is for reincorporation: Gather the women again to share about your true ordeal away from home. We will reflect back to you, fledged woman, that your change is significant and permanent.



Student of Life

A GAME: FIND MY PASSION

A woman named Sogini demonstrated this game, playing with a group of girls.

Simple rules, on a large piece of paper, draw a star burst with your name at the center. Then, use this list to remind you what you love. Write and doodle, think and create, then admire your passions, as fiery as the Sun. Include everything you feel curious about. Re-do if you like, several times, admiring all that you love. This is your shine.

Animals (real, imaginary, stuffed – what do you love? What have you loved?)

Plants (house, nursery, wild, include your favorite trees)

Theater (costume, pretend, musicals)

Writing (stories, poetry, comics)

Reading (fiction, non-fiction, comics)

Drawing (doodling, zentangles, pen and ink, pencils)

Painting (crayons, water-colors, acrylics, pastels)

Music (playing, singing, listening)

Dancing (modern, mystical, ballroom, ballet, jazz)

Sports (playing, watching – name all that you love)

Photography (portraits of people and flowers, scenery and memories)

Nature (wandering, naming, discovery, wondrous or scary, soothing or hazardous)

Logical science (math, chemistry, physics, biology)

Health science (medicine, nursing, herbal, alternative, integrative)

Food (cooking, growing, cross-cultural)

Sex (pleasure, lust, games, orgasms, safety for your Soul, LGBT)

SNEAK PREVIEW

Your adolescence extends all through the decade of your 20s. Your adult-like behavior accumulates between the ages of 18 and 29, but your full adult maturity coincides with an astrological symbol, the return of Saturn.

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Saturn is an apt symbol because of this question, “Who were you born to be?”

The decade of your 20s requires you to strengthen each one of your systems while your brain finally reaches maturity. You will use all of your senses to feel belonging and love and to integrate your fine mind by discovering where emotions live in your physical body.

I call this next Passage, Womanhood Bloom and want to share new secrets ...

- about your shadow-work
- how to understand your beliefs
- acquire problem solving
- develop personal analytic skills
- manage your habits
- experiment with various risks
- engage in movement and body works
- explore various divinations to open you up
- stabilize your emotions through good self-parenting

When you are ready, I feel confident to share more of the secret building blocks of womanhood. I thank you for this privilege to inspire your inner guide.



Emancipation Begins a Journey of Soul and Self

GIFTS FROM THE ELDERS: FIRST FLIGHT

Dear young woman, curiosities, choices, and passions will lead you down a winding path of growth. Love each one of your decisions with all your heart.

This Passage speaks in a different voice to the young woman herself. Mothers, read this chapter with your daughters. My natural voice, the voice of Mentor, offers tools to help you find your way through the maze.

When your parents provide a home, they intend for you to shape your identity, discover what you love, and use every opportunity to become strong and resilient enough to fly from the nest and thrive.

Your most profound gifts rise from the quiet:

- * Do you meditate? Do you dance? Do you sing?

Learn to weigh risk successfully. Ask these questions:

- * What trouble lurks?
- * How would anyone be harmed?
- * Are my moral standards involved?
- * Have I thought about who cares?

With **Risk Assessment**, a young woman's potential for harmony in relationships will increase and she will begin to think more like a woman.

- * What is my risk and how does it show up for me?

Resilience is bounce-back energy: **Mindfulness** is paying attention to the moment. These are the abilities to handle stress caused when the mind judges things as negative even before they happen.

- * Be mindful and kind to yourself rather than judgmental and critical.

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Today, name three things you don't like about yourself:

- * What is the positive version of each of these traits?
- * Can you reframe what you don't like to create a more positive interpretation?
- * Have you practiced self-parenting and self-care?
- * Have you learned to trust yourself and your passion?
- * Do you admire another woman's process? Can you ask how she manifests her dreams?

Nature will always be there for you. Nature is the connection to everything and deepens your feelings of belonging. You are Nature. You are related.

- * Can you begin a campaign to give back to Earth for all she gives to us?
- * What can you feel inspired to do for the Great Mother who will hold you all the days of your life?

NOTES FOR FIRST FLIGHT PASSAGE

- 1 You may have noticed the dedication page. Joseph W. Meeker changed my life when he asked me to write my play history. He was Mentor-in-chief on my doctoral committee. Joe presented me with this certificate when I completed that eye-opening assignment. Begin as soon as possible to create a play history for yourself. Nurture your personal experiences with play. Make a presentation of a certificate when you feel willing to surrender to play.
- 2 Howard Gardener, an Education professor from Harvard, was the first to write about multiple intelligences, and because I was a student, I paid attention to *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice* (1993). I am happy to say when Gardener added Nature intelligence to his list, I could accept his theories, although like everyone, I learn by blending two or three together.
- 3 Susan Cain wrote *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* (2013) to explore all the ways of being from introverted to extroverted and the in-between states of being. She felt the extroverts were getting all the attention. This will probably always be true.
- 4 We have influences that can only be felt, explanations can be tricky. My study of Astrology has been validating and satisfying. The depth keeps me interested. *My Orrey* takes some of the guesswork out of how the planets interact. I have learned a much deeper sense of the Cosmos by doing rituals with my husband on the Equinoxes, Solstices and cross-quarter days each year. Ken Condal built an Orrey in 7 months, see at www.zeamon.com or search YouTube.
- 5 *Circle of Courage*® was first introduced to me in 1995 by Larry Bentro. Information can be found all over the Internet but the original website, Reclaiming Youth International has become www.starr.org to help kids at risk, especially. The Circle of Courage founders are real heroes.
- 6 At the Mosaic Multicultural Foundation, Michael Meade hosts the Genius Project, see mosaicvoices.org He offers many YouTube talks about mythology, mentoring, and Genius.
- 7 Many meditation teachers are available. On-line and searchable, Sally Kempton or Pema Chodrin are both master teachers who offer help for you to begin a meditation practice. Brain scientists recommend this practice but only you can give this gift to yourself.
- 8 Ellen Langer PhD is the first woman to be tenured as a professor of Psychology at Harvard. An early researcher into *Mindfulness* (1989), her pioneering book of that time is enjoying a 25-year anniversary. We can continue to benefit from her major groundbreaking discoveries as she shows the mind connection to aging. *Counter Clockwise: Mindful Health and the Power of Possibility* (2009) explores her research on reversing aging with the power of mindfulness. See www.ellen-langer.com
- 9 I love this play on words, dirt and time connected. As soon as I heard Jon Young use dirt-time, I claimed it for myself, except I heard it first from him in 2004.
- 10 Abraham Maslow, a psychologist who awakened cultural consciousness with the conversation about needs, published a famous pyramid that placed a priority on needs. When I have been with slim resources, the basic needs do stand out the most, food and shelter.
- 11 A workshop with Michael Meade in 2013 deepened my understanding of initiation in the culture

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today. These words, "Initiation reveals yourself to yourself," became a takeaway after a full week-end of storytelling. After that I read his two books filled with the mythical stories that Michael Meade carries: *The Water of Life: Initiation and the Tempering of the Soul* (2006); and *Fate and Destiny: The Two Agreements of the Soul* (2010). I recommend the stories in these books as a sharing, Mother and Grandmother, to spark conversations about Soul and destiny with the young woman ready to fledge.

EPILOG

I advocate creating a more conscious and peaceful world by reintroducing an intergenerational practice of community initiations, Rites of Passage ceremonies for all ages and stages. I offer this book as an opening to the larger conversation we need to hold in our communities. In old initiation stories, rituals included death and rebirth; this may be why the long threads from our Ancestors' ceremonies were laid down on the ground.

Most people call the change which is so complete that the old self and the new self barely recognize one another, a transformation. Every person has this reflection, transformations happen to everyone living. Our culture could grow up considerably if we learned to simply celebrate the natural growth we see in all our relatives, adopted and related.



Ceremonial Life Spiral

At this planetary time, we are meant to call forth ancestral and blended traditions from several cultures and immerse ourselves back in nature to find our metaphors for change. I am only one among many helping to bring Rites of Passage and rituals of maturity celebrations back into our lives because it is

necessary to be seen and necessary to feel developmentally mature and whole. When a person is visible to family and Elders, our world is a much safer place than otherwise. It feels wonderful to be in a conscious community.

CEREMONIAL SPIRAL

Everyone can learn to see. Seeing into this Spiral of Life with my Elder eyes, I see nine distinct stages marked by biological development. More markers may be discovered, but I suggest we start where it makes most sense for everyone. The nine stages around the Life Spiral are biologically timed. Teaching awareness and ceremony for these stages of development feels urgent: The old self must give way to the new self with a small “d” death ritual.

Within extended families—aunts, uncles, parents and grandparents, nieces, nephews and all of our adopted relations—enough adult-power exists to get this started for the youngest ones coming up in your community. Babies must have a ritual that becomes part of their own mythology. Those who are seven will soon be eight, they are the ones we offer a Rites of Passage to next. There are many compelling reasons to welcome initiations for every biological and spiritual life Passage.