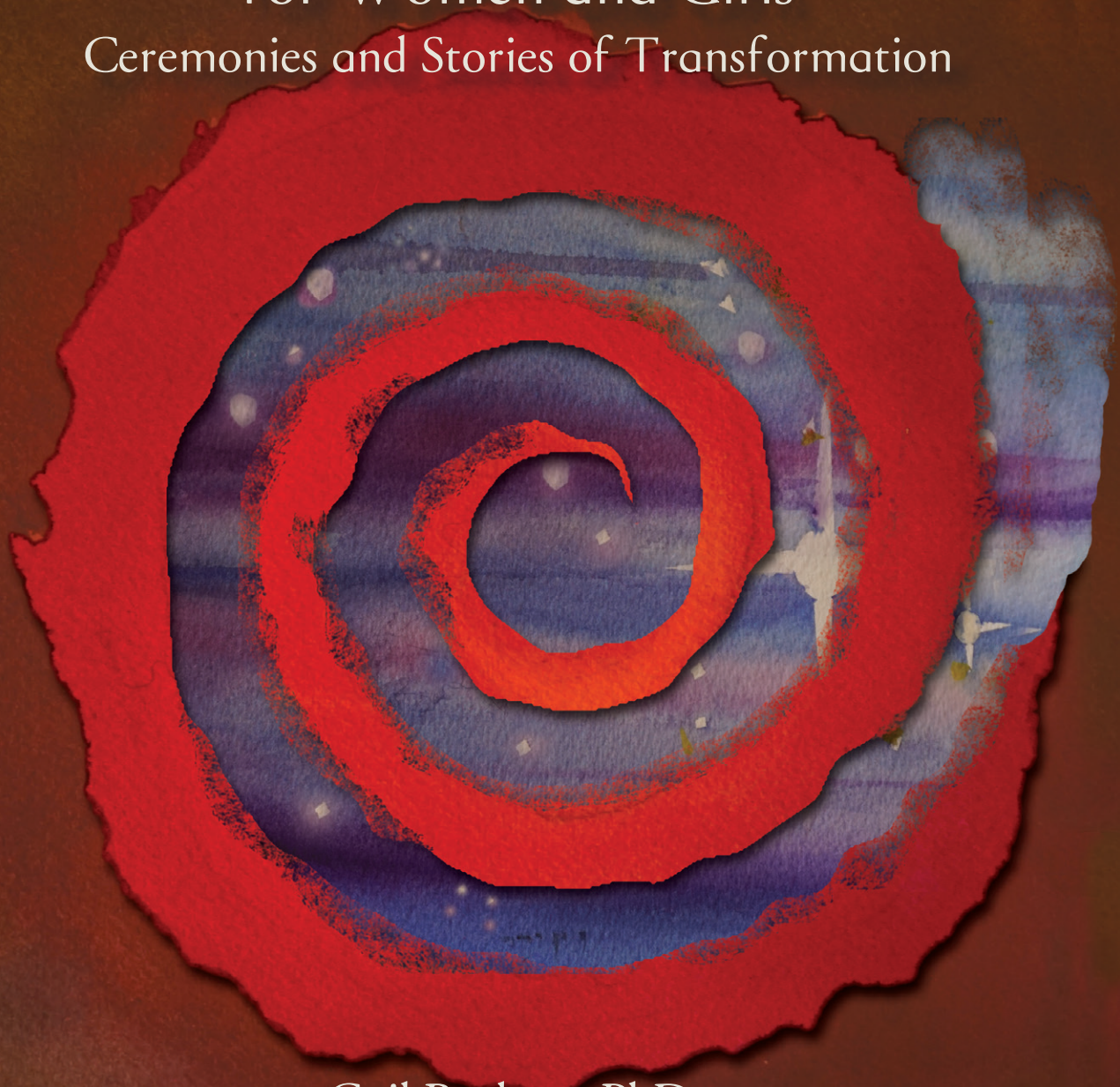


NINE PASSAGES

for Women and Girls

Ceremonies and Stories of Transformation



Gail Burkett, PhD

The Life Spiral



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Ceremonies and Stories of Transformation

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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.”

CONTENTS

INVITATION	10
BIRTH PASSAGE.....	17
The Intention: Creating and Assembling the Village.....	17
The Story: Grandmother's Glory	27
Gifts from the Elders: Birth Passage	40
NOTES for the Birth Passage.....	42
MIDDLE CHILD RITES.....	43
The Intention: Making All Rites Possible	43
A Story: Five Girls Welcome Middle Childhood	57
Gifts from the Elders: Middle Child Passage.....	96
NOTES for the Middle Child Passage	99
COMING OF AGE: FIRST BLOOD	100
The Intention: Gifting Women's Ways at Puberty.....	100
A Story: Millennial Girl's First Blood Ceremony.....	114
Gifts from the Elders: First Blood Passage	146
NOTES for First Blood Passage	148
FIRST FLIGHT	150
The Intention: Offering the Gift of Womanhood Training	150
The Story of Diverse Fledglings	186
Gifts from the Elders: First Flight.....	195
NOTES for the First Flight Passage	197

WOMANHOOD BLOOM.....	199
The Intention: Empowering Women for their Journey	199
An Honoring: Rachel's Story	246
Gifts from the Elders: Womanhood Bloom	256
NOTES for the Womanhood Bloom Passage	260
DEEPENING WOMANHOOD.....	262
The Intention: Becoming a Culture-Maker for the Village	262
Laura's Triple Initiation Story	302
Gifts from the Elders: Deepening Womanhood	320
NOTES for Deepening Womanhood	324
ELDER ENCORE.....	326
The Intention: Understanding Personal Wisdom Traditions	326
Now Her Story: Janis Monaco Clark	380
Gifts from the Elders: Elder Encore	394
NOTES for the Elder Encore.....	398
SPIRITUAL ELDER.....	401
The Intention: Enjoying the Longevity of the Life Spiral	401
Shirley Hardy's Story	429
Gifts from the Other Elders for the Spiritual Elder	437
NOTES for Spiritual Elder	439

DEATH PASSAGE	441
The Intention: Finding Consciousness in Life and in Death . . .	441
A Few Death Stories.	460
Gifts from the Other Elders Before Your Death	465
NOTES from the Death Passage	468
 EPILOG	 469
AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY	474
EDITOR’S BIOGRAPHY	476
DESIGNER’S BIOGRAPHY	477
GRATITUDES.....	478

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 inevitably 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.

INTRODUCTION

NINE PASSAGES

for Women and Girls
Ceremonies and Stories of Transformation

WOMANHOOD BLOOM, DEEPENING WOMANHOOD,
ELDER ENCORE

Three Adult Passages reveal your evolution as a human being. You have already played many roles student and seeker, mystic and medicine woman, loved by many soon you will understand how your personal development builds a life in layers with seasons, questions, curiosities, and ambitions. Initiation and the ritual of honoring thresholds of change teach you how to stay connected to your Soul. The first Passage is Womanhood Bloom, luscious and spacious. When your nest is empty or your Soul demands a change, a new twist called Deepening Womanhood is spiritually compelling. Go deeper, set out on an all new quest, rest only a little on your laurels. The edge Passage is the Elder Encore and welcomes Divine guidance. Pass through these gates of change with your women's circle and your family as witness; they need the model of you.

Just before launching into the vast abyss known as Adulthood, imagine that the years span from approximately 30 to 60. Your heart and emotional foundation will be forever fueled by all that went before: Your stories matter.

Developmentally, the quadrants of life stand in their own vortex of energy. With Child and Youth forming a foundation for Adulthood, you have already discovered or invented many coping mechanisms for challenges. The old saying is: God gives us no more than we can handle. Sometimes this seems barely true, but it is true nevertheless. Hindsight reveals that Divine guidance is more magical and mysterious than we originally thought.

As Elder Mentors, we feel especially reverent for how your life journey stands apart from ours. Your Soul is your guide, not us. This Mentor's guide to Adult initiations, audacious and challenging, reveals our deep respect for your accumulated wisdom. We inspire you to imagine your best life. There is something in these Passages that may help you through your rough patches. When you discover these three Passages for yourself, you are participating in the human evolution that Rites of Passage ceremonies brings to the culture. Change spirals spiritually through your stories. We offer you these ceremonies as our gift; once you have them, feel them, you may be inspired to give them away.

This is a little book with broad strokes. We have relished sharing discoveries that served us well through our adult years. The guiding question was the same as in the Adolescent guide: "What did I wish someone had told or showed me, had offered me, or had talked through with me?"

We emphasize adventure for the richness of those stories carry power, spiritual and experiential. Allow your spiritual quest to guide you, what your Soul came to do will surprise you.

Part of this search is for right livelihood: How do you do the exact thing for money which feels more like play? Nurture your talents and above all be daring. Often our jobs define us, limit us, and end up displeasing us. We are not bound to anything but our Souls. Well, women are most often bound to our children, but those relationships change as much as we do. Change is the mystic's magic for all of your adult years.

In the pages of this Mentor's guide, you will find the conversation rich and the tools meaningful. We have held our Mentor selves to high standards. We have opened doorways for all of womankind in search of our Higher Selves, our Soul-selves. We pray that we can each find our personal Gifts for Gaia and give generously.



WOMANHOOD BLOOM

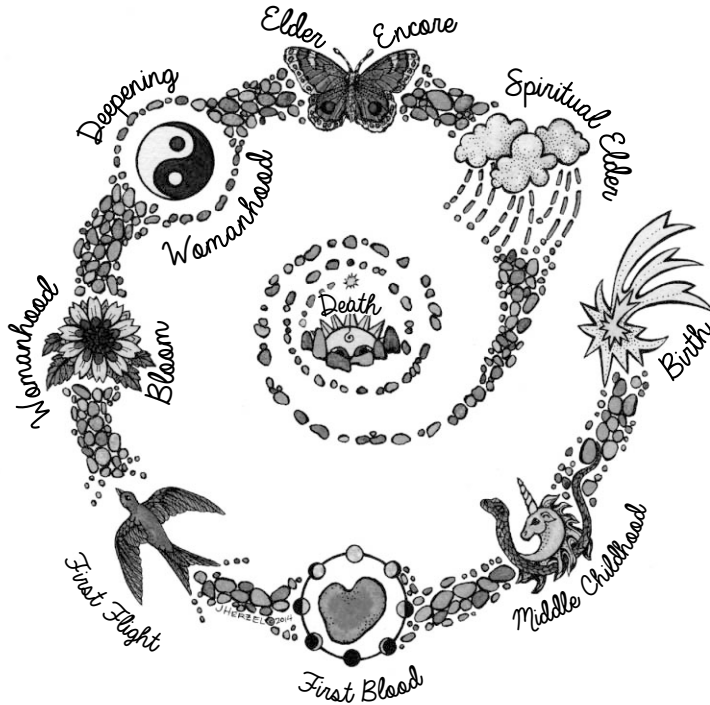
THE INTENTION:
EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR THEIR JOURNEY

My prayer: Stories contain lessons whether from the light side or the darker ways of being human. I pray we can honor all women's stories.

Cobblestones fill the space between each imaginative symbol which represents change, usually biological change. This Life Spiral offers a metaphor for the stories of your life, each stone preserves something of value for you. Memories often relate to another memory that came before or after. Side by side, these cobblestones show a life filled with stories. Sometimes your stories were consciously intended, often they were not.



The Life Spiral



Locate Your Soul in Time and Place

With my squinty eyes, I see life's events among the cobblestones on this Life Spiral. Each cobblestone, bubble-like with firm boundaries, holds the secret neuropathway to a memory, sometimes throbbing, wanting to be remembered. The momentous occasions of your life, held safe and secure inside a stone, connect to another story nearby. We are made of stories.

It's absolutely impossible to plan a life down to the finite detail. There is an old proverb that says: "If you want to make God laugh, just tell Her your plans." Being flexible like a willow is part of survival. You can plan to be happy and you can practice to be in balance, women will teach you by example. Intention contains a spiritual power; setting and holding intentions helps God and Great Mother help you. Women use prayer for the winds of change and we use intention to align with our Souls.

THE EAGLES' VIEW

The road ahead is all yours now, exhilarating and exhausting, festive and hauntingly lonely, filled with peaks and valleys, sometimes all of these at once, but this is your very own path. You cannot do it wrong. Relax in the stillness of your pillow-talk, you do not have to figure out your whole life all at once. Spend time with play rather than worry. Learn what play means and how it feels in your 19 and 20 year old body. Remember your playful self at 10 and 11 to rejuvenate your spirit and deepen your connections to play. Pure play provides the best cultural anecdote for serious women and the best dare I can toss your way. Connect your Soul to your body in the arms of Great Mother and you will fulfill the challenge to find balance through play. When you do, share with those you love. Call them out to play with you. This is a Gaia Gift, the Earth needs balanced women.

I am both fierce and tender as an Elder guide. Take from me all that you can work with and leave the rest. This is a joy-ride, this decade and those that follow. I offer you a strong shoulder and the best gleanings from many lives observed with love. Remember to play!

We all want to see where we are going, what is the path ahead? A wide-angle viewpoint relieves anxiety from not knowing in the midst of change. Welcome change. If you are gifted with sight, cultivate this gift. Especially if you are a city-gal, practice Eagle-sight with your imagination to see your path ahead.

Ancestors going all the way back through time have mimicked the strengths they found in their wild neighbors. Consider what First Peoples learned from watching and living with Bears and Wolves. Women can learn about mating and family by watching Geese. Do not forget that you will need a strong connection to the wild to find all of you.¹

To help you fully blossom in this Passage, I share secrets with you about personal skills to analyze and solidify your beliefs. This is very big, so you likely will be a work in progress beyond this decade. You will feel more mature every

year, managing and even evolving your habits, problem solving, experimenting with various risks, self-parenting, and understanding yourself enough so that you are able to stabilize your emotions. Your adult brain finally matures around age 25, find the awe and mystery of this news; neuro-pathways run through all parts of your body, which means you are somatically intelligent.²

Everything seems to have a root in this decade between 20 and 30—love, ambition, high adventure, and twists of fate. Your passions mingle with the spirit that breathes through all things and leads you to your destiny. I chose a 5-year marriage as my platform to learn a few lessons and the heartbreak was a profound teacher. Through work, with other weekend warriors, I found good company to explore wilderness where I met up with my own inner wild self. I love that I learned about my wild self. She is with me these many decades later as an inner capacity to feel comfort everywhere. The Earth became my true home in the decade of my 20s, even though far deeper feelings of connection came to me in later Passages. In the Eagle's view, this is your destiny, too.

My ability to feel solace and belonging from Nature helped me cultivate the perennial flowering of me to do the work offered up by my shadow parts—processing, loving, forgiving, and accepting that masked by pain, pure gold is the alchemical miracle of profoundly dark places.³

Your very long road of trials will reveal personality parts previously hidden. Dream journaling will help connect you to your vast subconscious self. Discovery and nurturing are dual focal points for your expansion during this decade, wild will happen and you will cope. Somehow, you will. Proceed slowly if you can and know that is the Woman's Way. If you feel judgments for yourself or others, fears or anxieties that prevent you from enjoying your life, this calls for shadow work. Go alone to a quiet place and sit. I was taught to observe a foot square of Earth and find help there.⁴ I promise you will find gold in your shadow-self and much relief in welcoming back all of parts that once wanted to be denied.



Your Tree of Life Begins with Your Roots

Eventually, Elders offered me such kindnesses that I learned to love my whole self. Through Nature connection, I will show you how your wild Nature self will reveal and heal your shadow self. I encourage you to cultivate your girl-gang, your Women's Circle, and especially Elders.

Farther down the path of your life, just before you turn 30, all of your unbelievable experiences from this 20's decade need to be bundled, wrapped in gossamer threads to fuel your transformational fire. At the end of the decade, the time known as the Saturn Return serves as a fine delineation between the far end of your adolescence and your Womanhood Bloom. Saturn takes a nice long path around the Sun, about 29.5 years for one complete cycle. Interestingly, this also marks the Threshold of adult maturity. This planetary influence is a powerful catalyst for change; actions and decisions at this Threshold have a long lasting effect on your life. Your inner muse rules change, it is your responsibility to be informed. I hope and pray you have Mentors and

Elders who will show you this Threshold, enclosing you in a liminal space and offer you a ceremony. When you turn 29, this is your assignment. Pull in your Village, be the wind of positive power for all you have worked for, and celebrate yourself with plenty of spiritually minded women, your kindred spirits.

A second full circle of Saturn around the Sun, another 29.5 years will bring you to your Elder Threshold. Development slows and time speeds up, it's one of those koans in life. Five Passage Thresholds filled your first Saturn Return and two will fill your second. This is because biological change slows all through menopause and finally reverses.

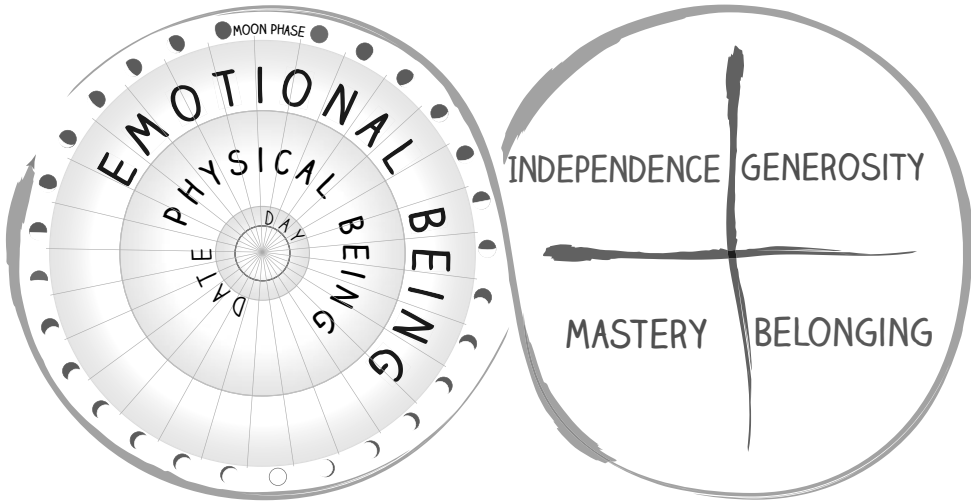
Reinvention is possible throughout your life. You can always renew or reinvent yourself with a clear plan for very different kinds of purposes. Make these changes with conscious intention: Have a baby, expand your family, start and stop relationships and businesses, get married or divorced, move across state boundaries, and experience trainings of all kinds. In my 20s, I reinvented myself by changing jobs three times. The miracle of human evolution is free will. Every single day brings change of some kind; graceful change expresses the nature of living and connects humanity together along a common thread.

I use this Eagle's view to deepen your understanding: Initiation happens step-by-step, day-by-day. Invite change in, make friends with the nuances of change. It is the one thing you can depend upon, change is constant. Watch the Moon, the seasons, and yourself for proof of change. Re-read the early Passages to be sweetly reminded of how completely you've transformed, at least four times already. Use the power of your own example to fuel your New Moon intentions.

You are actively building a life! Now that you have this Eagle's view of the days, years, and decades along your timeline, let's overlay a design that will lead you to the next Threshold ahead, your Womanhood Bloom.

As you think about building a life, I return your thoughts to *entelechy*, activated potential. This Elder-wisdom was planted in my heart and took root.

Potential has been a continuous thread in the weave of my life, yours too. This is your *entelechy*.



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Your practice of watching the Moon, dancing with la Luna feels like breathing. You simply do it. On the cosmic surface, the Moon is present enough to imagine or find in both the day sky and the night sky. Many layers deeper, all of the planets have an influence on earthlings. How deep you go is up to your curiosity. Your Circle of Courage becomes layered with values freshly minted through experiences. This action of *entelechy*, on the move, actively seeking your true potential, will help you track your Genius, your Soul-self, and all that it means to be human.

RITUALS

Every experience that moves through you can be held in a cobblestone, our visual metaphor for the bubble surrounding memory. As your brain continues to mature, experiences begin to intertwine, to cobble together. This increases the value of your Vision Quest rituals practiced on each of your Moontimes. Take time to reflect and wrap a ritual around your meaningful experiences to hold them in a sacred way. Take every advantage of the heavenly

Nine Passages for Women and Girls

opportunities to be a visioning and rejuvenating woman each time you shed your womb's blood. Your inner life will become rhythmic with your cycle. Make a record of yourself; put a date on your dream-log, your art, and your journal. The progression of your maturity will be visible and encouraging. Playfully mark these quiet moments of your life with ritual. The sacred elements of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water combine in infinite ways to mark a moment of your day with quiet.

Remember when you made a wish and blew out the candles on your cake? Candles represent intention. Light them often.



Mentoring and Friendships Make all the Difference

A curious mind and rhythmic practice is how you develop your spiritual intelligence. Only you can develop this inner sense of yourself. As often as I say to myself, slow down, I would like to say the same to you. When I use the word ritual, I mean deeply personal, and rich. No one but me needs to understand my symbols and the meanings I place on them. No one but you needs to understand your inner life. Use quiet, symbols, and rituals to investigate your depths.

I pause here long enough for both of us to be smart: If a therapist or counselor is needed because the knot of our lives feels too tight to unpick

alone, definitely use the services of Divine listeners or energy workers. I have asked for help many times through the course of my long life. If the option of a class for study is needed to open you, to free you, to unlock your creativity, sign up! The possibilities to receive more joy out of life are truly endless. Notice when you feel strongly about something exciting, this is passion rising. As my most wise friend Kathleen says, “Listen for your Soul knocking. Give yourself permission to choose.”⁵

Ritual brings the gift of slowness into your heart and will enrich every aspect of you. As simple as watching the Moon, and swaying in a dance rhythm you can deepen your feelings of spirituality with a remarkable, beautiful cadence that is quiet.

My practice has many layers. While lighting candles and smudge, and rearranging my altar, I allow thoughts, friends, and loves to float through my heart space. My mind slowly disengages. Before dawn I sit in my meditation chair. I feel prayerful, mellow, and in touch with my Soul. Using my Moon altar, I gain insights about my life that cannot be coaxed out any other way. I find my four sacred elements penetrate into journaling and walking. They complement each other. I need them all to see inside.

RETURN TO THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE

Remember the four foundation stones of early adolescence: **Belonging**, **Mastery**, **Independence**, and **Generosity**. You first learned about those four values during your teen years; the Circle of Courage⁶ laid down the first layer of self-awareness to help you understand risk. Now let’s add *woman-power* to make the Circle of Courage more meaningful for this Passage. This is good mentoring, helping you examine values.

When you noodle around with **Belonging**, you may sense that it’s elusive. A few values will give it more depth. Sometimes you feel a sense of belonging, sometimes you don’t. When you accept the power that is yours,

belonging becomes part of your mental health. It requires effort on your part to build a community around you. That is the hidden ingredient in belonging. To feel kinship, you must give mindful attention to those you care about. Attend to everyone you have a relationship with, everyone.

Look closer, what do I mean, attend? Look at a baby, what makes a baby thrive? My friend Arianna taught me that *focused attention* was the special juice that all babies need to thrive. I say, that's what we all need. Attention is how bonds are made stronger. To define kinship, first you feel an energy; you sense a positive charge from someone new. Besides attention, you might think about and write about what you notice in appreciation, even how you might collaborate. Appreciation and collaboration both define attention in new ways, which leads back to belonging. Helpfulness and playfulness are powerful energies that make every bond stronger.

When you seek solitude, the awe and intimacy of a quiet wood may teach you about your own spirituality. By meandering around with me, I invite you to wander. Invent for yourself the simplest concepts to expand your sense of belonging. For me, trees hold me and I return the deeply rooted feeling of being held offering a hug, often.

Wherever you live, an entire bioregion waits to be explored, alone and with friends. Belonging attaches to place, as in knowing the place you live, as it does to the people who live with you in this place. What other words, feelings, and values help describe belonging for you?

Mastery implies devotion to one or more of your inner fires and the passion for creating something that comes from you. Introspection and dreaming will help gather ingredients necessary to pursue mastery of the things you love. Audaciously and boldly you locate your inner flame. When you push fear aside, the fire inside of you will light the way into your unexplored inner wilderness of talent and gifts. Fan this inner flame to reveal the source of your Genius.

Certainly, it's more fun to have someone cheerleading your brilliance,

but only you hold the vision and only you need to believe in your abundant abilities. Only you can follow your Soul's entelechy.

In seeking mastery, your Genius is fully engaged. When you play with your Genius, you will find your purpose. This needs only your focused heart. Soul and Genius are synonymous for the stardust that you brought with you at Birth. Increase your awareness to notice how modern culture has dumbed us down. Rise up in personal rebellion to defend your inner Genius. What help do you need to express this Soul-essence of you?

I offer the values associated with mastery: Devotion, excellence, audacity, originality, focus, dreaming, and most of all passion. These are the powers you draw into yourself for the 10,000 hours you need for true mastery. When you are brave enough and bold enough, you will discover that your self-respect depends on you choosing this path of mastery. Find that one thing or weave several things and hold on for the ride that will bring only smiles to the experience of your inner world.

Independence is a much bigger value than it first appears. What exactly does independence imply? Can you find self-reliance and financial security in there? How about adventure? I find the true depth of independence in optimism and humor, in preparedness and integrity. All of these values wrap around Courage itself. Feeling brave enough to take a risk for growth will help you find and feel independence.

You will feel the power of your independence in bare naked honesty. Revealing the truth of independence will straighten your spine, you already possess many of these values. Peering into your independence, you claim the powers of acceptance, integrity, and resilience. By claiming these inner powers, you will find the delight—and the chutzpa or nerve—in recommitting to your own fearlessness. All of the values of independence give you lion-heartedness, the core of courage to live your life.

Once you feel this core value of independence for yourself, you will dis-

cover the interlocking value of interdependence. Every one of these building blocks of life work this way—they are interrelated and you're strengthened by all the others in your relationship sphere.

The final quadrant on your Circle of Courage that generates so many good feelings worth pursuing is **Generosity**. The essence of altruism is heart energy. If I direct the energy of generosity inward, I find care and warmth, along with silence and rest. I need those soothing energies to feel generous to myself. When I turn that energy outward, my imagination runs wild. Wondering how I might be useful or in some small way, in service to another, I think of respect above all with loyalty, surprise, and usefulness nestled among patience, extravagance, and empathy.

I encircle your symbolic wheel with *woman-power* to energize your Circle of Courage, a circle filled with good medicine. Check-in, breathe deeply, and see how your energy is flowing, around and in and out, moving gracefully as your breath. Hopefully, you will feel inspired to make a drawing to explore your own values. Embellish. Use art and poetry, song and dance, to make these values your own.

NATURE CONNECTION

In one sweetly compact way, your Mind-Body-Spirit and wild emotions coalesce. You are a miracle of evolution and your long ancestry lives in your genes informing you with instinct and intuition. The one place where each human, each woman feels most at home, is out in Nature. This statement is true even if you were (1) raised in a city (2) deprived of deep Nature connection throughout your growing years (3) freak out over the thought of a spider and/or (4) seek more of anything in your life.

I know that *Nature Connection* begs the question, why Nature? Being a Soul wanting and needing an Earthly experience to advance our lessons, you and I chose this planet where Nature flourishes in thousands of millions

of forms. Nature is our primary home and our inspired teacher. Earth, where Nature is friend and Great Mother to all, provides our one and only home in this lifetime. This is a truth known to women and men alike who have touched into the core of our Divinely Feminine selves.



Maybe your Tree of Life looks like this: Who Are You? Who Are Your People?

For just a moment, consider where ideas come from: Inside your gorgeous, somatic computer-brain or from outside to inside? I don't mind how much credit you take, or how long you sit at the drawing board or keyboard to originate an idea, your greatest inspirations come outside to inside. Great Mother and Great Mystery source all ideas and then provide the energy and the raw materials. To receive your dose of inspiration, go outside and tune in.

Healers have long known about the essence of Great Mother and Great Mystery to soothe, to perform miracles through herbs and waters, and to transform inner brain imbalances back into a calm heart. Each human is sourced from stardust which is our tuning fork. Deep Nature connection returns your focus to your heart where stardust has settled. This holy stuff of the Universe

is your personal fuel. You can easily recreate this connection within yourself, but first, silence your chatty mind and open your heart. Step outside and find the awe in air. Awe—feel the inspiration in this word. Pure delightful awe is the reward of your curious mind. Your connection with place is all about feeling awe, which is heart work.

Sit with your back against a big old tree, one who has been around for a century or two. Do this in the physical as often as you can and in your imagination when you must substitute. Invite her to become your tree of life. Send energy down through your tailbone to wrap around her roots and allow your heart to soar up into her branches. This is medicine. You need this Earth and Sky medicine. Open your heart space and use your senses. Quiet your brain and repeat daily if possible. I use this ancient shamanic practice, a meditative practice, to ground myself back to reality and to reclaim a mindful state.

Restoration of your essential self can happen anytime you discover this miracle of dirt-time. All of your Moon walks give you dirt-time, any time you wander with a curious mind, communing with the Earth on a park bench, this is dirt-time. I recommend quiet, inner quiet, even when the city deems otherwise. Having spent decades in career-mode and citified, dunking my feet in a stream and closing my eyes always gives rise to tears and brings me back to myself. Recovering from the years I call my mindless decades, I wondered what was missing and now I know—Nature restores; we all need Nature to move from a state of surviving into thriving. Dirt-time, just as it implies, gets you out with Mother Earth. I go every single day and say prayers for you; that you may feel inspired to awaken and heal yourself, that you may find sufficient stillness to welcome your Genius.

HEALING THEN AWAKENING

First Blood and First Flight were Thresholds of change, delivering evidence of your womanliness. In the years between these early Thresholds, you rarely used these two words, woman and womanhood. Laughing, crying, dancing, you still feel the adolescent roller-coaster inside of you. Yet, every day,

magically, you create more *woman* in your body and in your heart-mind. Some of your joys and dramas may feel like they happened yesterday. I welcome you to this interesting time, parlaying all that you have learned, using your dreams and your heart to heal and shape your woman-self.



Let's say this is your Heart: Wet, Wild, and Beating for Love

Coming to consciousness is your great challenge; this is how you will shape yourself with the cleanest brush-strokes of your Soul. Remember from the Circle of Courage, values are hidden powers. Your woman-power puts your unique and influential stamp on your whole environment, the culture that surrounds you. By understanding this power and influence you see how you can be a culture-maker for others. Each woman has exceptional powers to create and together we are truly a force. When you speak these words, woman and womanhood referring to yourself, you awaken the desire to connect to your powers and to your purpose. You will find no ordinariness in following your own Soul.

Society has produced expectations that belong to no one woman. Be

vigilant for superwoman who can overtake you at any time. Take the time to heal your inner perfectionist. Healing opens the way for consciousness to expand. Ask Elder women who have experienced the transformative fire of initiation, what awakened them? Usually, they will begin with healing, then reclaiming personal power through sacred rituals.

Healing requires an intention, a focus from you. Therapists call this process which means seeing inside your memories for how choices led to consequences and then finding ways to completely unhook your attachment to the hurt. Energy healers and therapists will help you move your psyche through any rough patches. My teen years were challenged and therapy would have helped me, but I was stubborn and blinded by my false-self. My paycheck, a sign of being driven by ego, seemed to report success. I didn't understand the values in Circle of Courage or learn how to be quiet with my visions. I was led around by ego and shake my head remembering how long that sleep-walking persisted. Because my passion remained dormant, so did my entelechy, my potential.

Attention and intention will heal your heart. Look deeper where you find barbs and hooks and any attachments to the past that hold you there. Personal attention will help you reclaim the Soul parts which you gave up to please someone else or gain approval. You need all of your parts to feel whole. Some parts were sliced off to be likable in school or gain a teacher's endorsement. A fair amount of Soul moved aloft in false support of your self-image. Anything that hurts now, feelings, attitudes, memories, those still need to be healed. Growth and healing depend on you doing this work for your psyche.

Discover the trendy practice of mindfulness. It is parallel work with healing. Mindfulness is brain training: Your present moment practice grows with repetition. You literally train your brain to pay attention to your heart.

Every person wants and needs love. The neediest part of your psyche may have compromised important parts of yourself to feel the love you wanted. Those compromises left your Soul out of the equation. Look deeper and

deeper. My friend Diana taught me about peeling the onion to recover my Soul parts. When I first began to look back so I could heal, my way of dredging came through my physical body while I chopped wood for my stove. When I shared, Diana allowed my pain to pass right through her.⁷ Who will hold you while you do this inner searching?

Use all available tools, talking therapy is wonderful, so are the woman-tools of journaling, art, and dance whirled together your way. Your family will always be your family and will remain your home safety net, but you are shedding the snakeskin of dependence. After processing your teen experiences, your First Flight Passage transformation will feel complete and you will be free to be you.

Find ways and means to release what no longer belongs to you. Do not continue to carry pain of the past around. Releasing it may take some effort, and be well worth it. Intention always helps. Candle-lit prayer ritual, writing down my tears, and then burning the pages and offering the ashes to the river, this is what works for me.

Please allow wise old women, your Elders, to teach you the art of letting go. See the path behind as the only way you could get to where you are now, nothing more. Be mindful of the pain of regret and ego conflicts. You need to tend to your pains and heartbreaks like a Medicine Woman placing salve over your own wounds. This may be the most important work of your life. Healing requires skill that you learn and then use to deepen the rest of your life. You become your own Medicine Woman. This psychic healing process reveals to you the wonders of your inner life. Do whatever it takes!

This is the time, earlier the better, to examine self-parenting. Rather than mimic your parents, go deep into your memories and begin to parent yourself mindfully. The art of self-parenting is part of your identity formation. As an art, the day-to-day permissions and coddling you give yourself need to be conscious and evolving. Learn about love, tough love, and wounded love. Do not avoid the school of hard knocks if a challenge crosses your path.

Lessons that come the hard way may be fabulous blessings and provide the clearest teaching. Remember that play and laughter can heal those knocks, and mistakes often provide a good laugh along with a great lesson.

At times, escape is all that you can choose for yourself. Wave a flag of exhaustion, invite yourself to surrender playfully. Read a great book or two, watch a movie or two. Escape means entering an altered space. Play is one of the finest creative acts of our animal natures. What activity moves you closer to bliss? A wise man, Joseph Campbell, instructed us to “Follow our bliss.” He was talking about finding bliss where your Soul feels playful.

CORE BELIEFS

Your core beliefs are what makes you, you. I tread on sacred ground here, but in a most gentle way. Many beliefs may feel quite rigid, but if you are able to relax and search out what you believe, learning to track your thoughts, you may find your very core is fluid like the Earth’s. Thousands of sources will catch your attention and help you understand your core beliefs. Be patient.

When you practice with a peaceful, introspective ritual of looking inside for ten minutes each day, you will find that many of your beliefs have been inherited. Bring your parents and grandparents into your mind and fill in the blank: From her or him, I inherited ____ : Write page after page. Your manners, your gait, and many of your behaviors have been directly inherited or influenced. Every relationship has shaped you and added to your core beliefs in some unique way.

A broad stroke of *human ecology* created every one of your core beliefs. In 1907, this term was first used by a woman, a home-economics teacher. Ellen Swallow Richards defined *human ecology* as the surrounds of human beings and personal effects within those surroundings. Since Birth you have been encircled by people and symbols. Without you realizing it, they have all been teachers. As girls, we loved watching women for clues about who we

might become. Your parents carefully taught you things and mostly with pure heart-intention. Your Grandparents, Aunties, and Mentors have all taught you things, sometimes by modeling, or as an offering like, “Here is something interesting for you to learn.” This is how we found the fun inside of sewing, cooking, or gardening. Every environment you shared—churches, wilderness, home, and shopping malls—provided icons and symbols to sift through now like grains of sand.



Tree of Life and Death

When you evaluate your core beliefs with people and objects as outside influences, you learn about your personal psychology. You may see this as another layer to be healed. Search through your beliefs with playful curiosity. This is your human ecology. The seeds of your past become your present; the

seeds of your present become your future. My editor and wise friend Janis says, “Only in silence is pure knowledge.”

Begin with observable topics, those that are religious and spiritual in nature. Look also at your political and social beliefs. You may discover that you inherited feelings of pain and general emotional patterns. Keep only what belongs to you. Beneath every belief is a principle, begin to discover yours. Be patient, this may take some time because beliefs can be sticky and deeply engrained. I know you will spend years learning from your inner-self what you believe about Birth and Death and God, what you believe about love and partnerships. Relax into this as a process, hold the questions until answers arise from inside of you. You have time, blessed time.

In this broad and deeply personal arena of core beliefs, you will find foundation stones you didn’t know you had, the very bedrock of your life-dance. This is the most private work. Allow your inner smile to flow through your breath as discoveries settle into you. Explore with an Elder Mentor and you will learn about trust. How you fill in the blanks about your core beliefs may lead you to begin again to search for teachers.

I recommend that you focus on your Soul as an influence. Your inner mystery found only in deep quiet will reveal so much to you. Quiet, the secret to listening is where you connect to your Soul. As you search through your core beliefs, I urge you to doodle-art with your passions, all the things you love that light your way. I call this guiding light, Soul; it’s also called your Genius and your Higher Self. I bow deeply to your Soul, the essence of you that permeates your skull and your heart muscle and your fingertips. I believe in your Genius but do you? Let’s coax her out together, shall we?

With all my heart, I believe in the creative Genius who lives within you. Train your mind to focus on what you want most. At one time or another, we all realize the answers are found inside. Because your Genius is hidden among all your core beliefs, search carefully for your basic passion, the Soul-full energy connected to your Genius. Search youtube.com for Michael Meade, he has

launched a Genius Project through his Mosaic Foundation.⁸ As a proponent of Genius, and one of the more accessible Elders, he directs your attention and discovery of Soul through story and mythology.

I am rather direct on this subject: Soul and Genius are your stardust and came with the first breath of spirit into your wee body at the moment of your Birth. Your Genius is an essence readily available to your senses when you focus your attention there. Your Soul is waiting to be acknowledged. They are the same, Soul and Genius. See how all of this fits into your core beliefs. Your Mother wants to believe in your Genius. Anyone who hesitates has not yet connected with their own deep passions. This teaching is very old; see how your core opens and feels receptive to this emerging Soul-self.

My Soul sounds a gong that wakens me in the morning and causes a smile to float up from my heart. She is the essence that causes me to smack my lips and head out for a walk because I need to stop thinking and feel the mind in my body. The Soul of me is my dearest companion. I took a long time to find her, only to discover she was there all along.

You only need to believe in what you most love to do and have always loved. The world needs you to find this inner fire because your gifts are near. That is why you are here on Earth right now. Look into all of the facets of your passion and you will find your Soul. You know I begin with play. What gives you such joy you can only call it play? To locate your Genius, this is where you begin. What do you love? How does it all fit around your core beliefs?

Every ounce of your passion, every drop of your capacity, all your talents and interests wrap around the little star-seed inside, your Genius. You have plenty of time, many Moons, to dance with these parts until you feel you know your Genius. Searching to find this core of you is your personal 10,000-hour project. This inner fire deserves your focus. Opportunities will appear before you because holy, spiritual energies are attracted to this kind of focus. I invite you to gaze at the cobblestones and imagine them beginning to take form out of the mist. You are building a life of meaningful stories, one and then another.



You May Need to Revisit Beliefs before You See Your Way Through the Wilderness

SENSES TURNED ON

You will sharpen your brain in search of your core beliefs while you learn to assess risk. Each time you combine these simultaneous tasks, your neurological network elongates and creates new connections. Through practice, your abilities will expand and then weave back together. Practice your inner capacity to weigh decisions, to self-parent, and to understand your belief systems. Practice mindfulness, which is inner self awareness. To increase your

confidence, practice being totally in your body and not so much spinning your thoughts. When you choose quiet for yourself and take charge of expanding your neurological connections throughout your body with focused thoughts, you build this into a skill. Practice is required.

Women learn a powerful bundle through sex. How is your sexual intelligence? You deserve pleasure. Ask yourself, “How has sex informed me and shaped me?” More to the point, I ask, “How would you describe your sexual life?”

Just like motherhood for women, thousands of sources inform us about sexuality. Advertisers spend billions of dollars to capture your attention, reminding you that you are first and perhaps foremost, a sexual being. Examine your story and if necessary, adjust your intentions. The bloom of your woman-self is just beginning to open. You will be sexual for decades. Can you be mindful about sex and pleasure?

Consider motivations and distractions, and all the other ways of learning—emotional, social, cultural, and sensual. At 20 or 25, it’s very difficult to know how you know all that you do know. In your triune brain, many beliefs and skills hold a genetic clue, maybe even a turned-on gene. Other ways of knowing are deeply primitive. How do you know all that you know?

With your finely tuned old-brain-parts, you can smell trouble and feel in your gut when something is good, or off, or dangerous. With all of your sensory powers, you see, feel, taste, and touch the world in miraculous ways that perhaps you have not considered. If you are midway through this Passage, your brain has finally matured and you can trust your decisions. This inner work is another way to know you. When you know yourself, you will trust and like yourself more. The word mindful leaps out like a gazelle, this concept brings everything together. You will feel spiritual in one moment and emotional the next, then gazelle like, your body feels like leaping in the air. By watching yourself with an inner eye, you will soon see how each of your senses and all the different ways to learn something, combine and recombine. The way to wrap together these parts and pieces of being is through mindfulness.

Nine Passages for Women and Girls



Allow Nature to Inspire Your Evolution

When you become deeply involved with your personal evolution, if you will use true patience and clear persistence, your intuition will mature and your meditations will grow more enjoyable. To help shed attachments that no longer serve you and begin to understand obsessions, begin with mindful evaluations. Teachers, coaches, mentors, or therapists can be valuable guides to help with this inner exploration. How the right guide at just the right time comes to you or crosses your path may also be an interesting story—coincidence, fate, or merely mystery.

Once you become a practiced and loving evaluator without judgment or criticism, with kindness and compassion to guide this journey of your life, self-trust begins to expand. You can relax and make good choices based on your beliefs about yourself. When you hold fluidity and flexibility as sacred companion attitudes, time will bring you opportunities to practice your core beliefs.

Before you go too many steps down a new path, hesitate and check-in with yourself to ask, does this fit with what I really believe? Why? Soon you will automatically see both sides of a question, pro and con. Your brain is powerful and growing every day; you can almost feel your neural systems expand and

spread throughout your body.

Seeing your environmental surroundings as influences on your personal ecology, you now choose with your conscious mind and heart. In practical assessment and quiet meditation, examine your core beliefs before you come under the influence of new teachers. While you are still pliant, moldable, and susceptible, you will benefit from this baseline look inside. Everything begins with a thought, including your experience this day. In the wise words of one of my Dearhearts who remembers this decade with clarity, Kim Gridley, emphatically said, “You do not need to figure it all out at once.”⁹

TEACHERS: INNER AND OUTER

To deeply honor your unique Soul, your inner power needs to be stoked, supported, and mentored. Maybe you do need to stretch your wings all by yourself or maybe you will find an all new girl-gang. Truly, you need a grandmotherly type who, over this entire decade, will listen as you discover what you think by what speaks through you in story, in beliefs, in philosophy, in morals, in desires, and in values. Find a girlfriend, a teacher, a mentor, and adopt a vital and wise Elder. Take us for a walk and talk, that’s all.

The essence of you that is beyond biology, beyond the blended gene-pool of your Mother and Father, is your inner teacher and guide, unique to you. Listen to your dreams before you leave your bed, write them down. What resonates from this deep sub-conscious part of you? Listen as your intuition fires up with your chakra practice. Pay close attention to your Moon. There is so much to learn about your inner life and the multitude of guiding energies who support you.

Learning to listen deeply is primal and essential. Stillness is your greatest teacher, always and in all ways. Your inner world is creative, juicy, and emotional. Your elemental nature grows from earth, air, and water and mixes with your stardust to fuel a seemingly endless supply of power and energy. I am edging closer to the next great teacher: Relationships.

Nine Passages for Women and Girls

Working their way with you through a circular timeline, many people have crossed your path. Here is where you begin to consider their importance. The first step for your psychological well-being is listening to your fired-up inner-self; talking to another, someone sacred to you, is the important second step. When you add another body made of stardust, you will learn even more about you. With this confidant, one special other person, talk about things, all kinds of things. Become a little humble and practice respect. The honest truth about becoming more human, more upright, more of what you desire, living and growing toward your worldly dreams is one long quest. Become curious. Right after your friend listens to all of your musings, turn the talking stick over to see what you can learn from her or from him. This turns up the volume, the heat, and multiplies the possibilities.



Mentoring from Nature

I have been a Mentor for the past 20 years, deeply watching and holding possibilities. Watching how my little Doves have made choices and how easily a few choices backfired. I wrote this poem to the Dearhearts who call me Mentor, one especially:

THINKING OF YOU

*No one but you can sail your boat.
No one but you can make your mistakes.
No one but you can feel what hurts.
Celebrate feeling what others cannot, then
Ask a healer to help you find balance again.*

*No one but you can fall in love with love.
No one but you can practice personal care.
No one but you can ask your questions.
You are never alone even in solitude
That's when the angels gather around you.*

*No one but you can meditate for you.
No one but you can keep your body moving.
No one but you can express your gratitudes.
Experience how the world changes perspective
When an attitude of gratitude lights your way.*

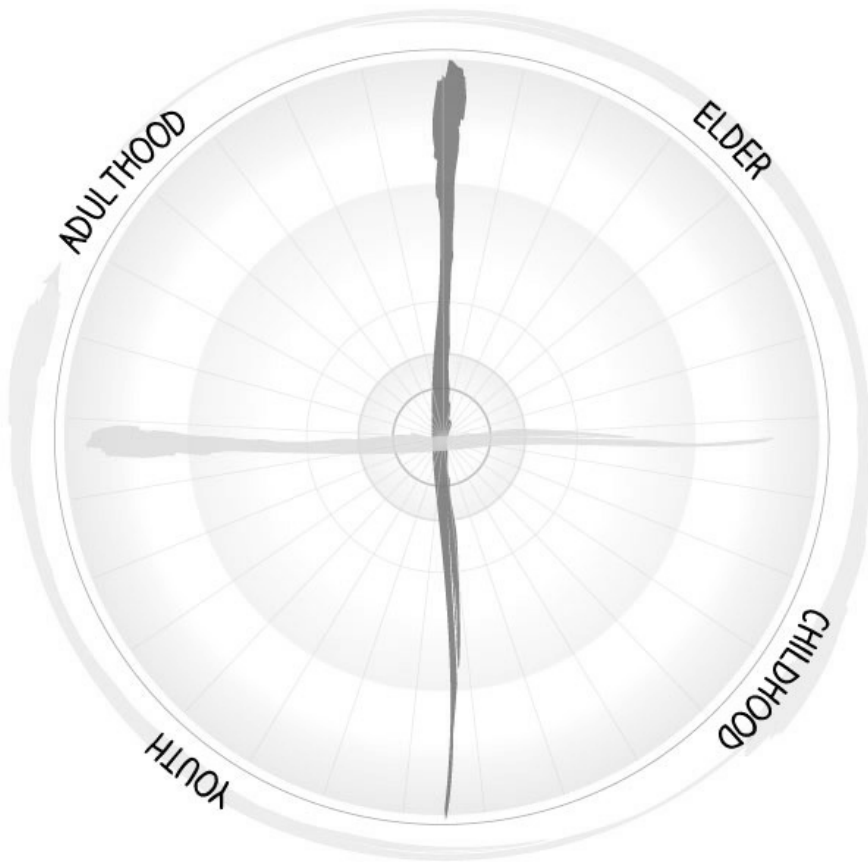
*No one but you can set intentions for you.
No one but you can hear your Soul's cry.
No one but you can set your course straight.
When destiny comes calling, and you're sure*

Do you plan to answer or ignore your gifts?

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Nine Passages for Women and Girls

I believe in the saying, when the student is ready the teacher appears. Native Americans widely share their ceremonies and spirituality as a recovery practice to heal from the past four centuries of oppression. Eastern mysteries are openly accessible through yoga classes, ashrams, and Buddhist retreats. You cannot read all the books on any subject found at your local library, but you can try. Investigate the esoteric side of everything that appears along your path.



Relationship Wheel for You to Fill with Names © Janis Monaco Clark

Take care with your discovery process; find the patience you need to be open and flowing through your days. If you feel tense and anxious, your Genius will crawl under the covers and wait for your growing pains to subside.

Feelings are key to discovery. Emotional intelligence is the new permaculture of human ecology. You must consider yourself responsible for your feelings as well as your thoughts. Focus on mastery of what you love the most and how it can lead to your right livelihood. Only you know the answers. Perhaps you will discover how this relationship wheel mirrors your heart.

SHADOW AND CONSCIOUSNESS

If you are lucky and stay alert to find caring teachers, you will receive help navigating this decade of your 20s, your late adolescence. Each coach or teacher, in fact each person who comes in close, will change you and will help you reveal your essence. Experience is most valuable when it reflects back to you what you love, feel, believe, trust, and hope for in the future. Carefully consider what experiences will lead to a deeper consciousness. This wakeful awareness, an indefinable essence that feels like your chest is expanding, helps to cultivate your gifts and talents. Such a deep heart connection is needed with anyone from whom you receive teachings, stay open to receive from another's Soul. Remember, you are solely and personally responsible for activating your Genius and developing your Soul's purpose.

As you reach for maturity and Womanhood Bloom, consider yourself the consciousness project with your mental, physical, emotional, and psychological aspects activated. For decades, scientists have been searching for the nature and science of consciousness. Probably, it's not their job because it's closer to pure energy than pure science. The mind has a controlling influence over the immune system and in reverse, placebos, sugar pills, cure disease because the psyche has been deeply engaged. Many of the leading edge intellectuals agree—your Genius, the Soul of you, radiates from your heart-mind. Trust only those who use the language of the heart to tell you about these philosophies of living.

The world of positive and negative charges known as dualities—shadow and light, male and female, good and evil, hope and despair—seem to be opposites, but

Nine Passages for Women and Girls

often contain wholeness like two sides of a coin. Dualities, many times defined as opposites, will often blur into one another to become a whole piece. To recognize dualities is one thing. The trickier step is to consciously recognize that judgments cause energy to hold dualities rigid instead of fluid. I have learned from dualities and judgments all my life, they are great teachers. I have learned that my capacity in the shadow side of my Soul-self is as deep as the capacity of my light side.

So I ask this question to surprise you: What troubles have you touched in on already that, through carefully looking into the dark side of your personal story, have something to teach you about your shadow self? Usually, trouble finds us to teach about shadow. Sometimes the characteristics or tendencies which reveal the darker side of your nature will become great personal teachers. Clearly, tendencies toward addiction or narcissism for instance, reveal what you would rather not choose. This is a great thought to contemplate: Exactly what do you dislike and why? What do you fear and why? What troubles have found you already?



Cross over the Bridge to your Whole Self

We are all touched by whatever comes close to us, that is a law of energy and often we invite the energy to move from outside to inside. Whatever you intensely dislike in another person offers you a clue to your hidden-self; contemplate and write about this until your own truth comes out. When my girlfriends learned this secret within shadows, we consciously used “mirroring” to reveal more of our truths to one another.

Everyone has hidden selves, shadow selves. Pay attention to how another person reflects these aspects back to you. At the height of my career, I noticed every homeless person on the streets. My job took me to large cities in 44 states and I saw so much I couldn’t process. I absorbed and practiced something like mindlessness. See how that energy got close to me, under my skin. I had to be homeless myself to know and value making my own home again.

That year, 1990, effectively removed all of my own judgments and deepened compassion for myself and others. Where else can such great lessons be learned? For me, being homeless without a place to rest my head or to wash myself or my dish was a twist of fate; I have experienced so many twists and they were all great teachers. I invite you to be watchful of how your Soul delivers lessons to your doorstep. In all ways, observe how fate works within your core belief system. You may find you believe in fate, in coincidence, and in Soul-contracts that hold them both. My twists of fate are those great teachers that are without parallel outside in the world. I would not reach for them for myself; my Soul chooses them for me.

FACETS, CHAKRAS, AND ORACLES

Women have so many facets we cannot possibly see them all at once. Let’s explore what I mean by this word, facets. Think of a gemstone, cut and polished. You may even have a favorite cut that you prefer to represent facets of yourself you want to explore.

Remind yourself of the expedition: Self-discovery. Simply add “self”

behind any of these word combinations and these many facets will begin to appear and surprise you:

Wounded and Well-self

Tame and Wild-Nature

Bleeding and Visioning

Motherly and Protective

Tender and Sexy

Dreaming and Planning

Warrior for Peace

Activist for Justice

Seeking and Finding

Sensuous and Sense-aware

Partner and Solo

Opened and Closed

Creative Genius

Flowing and Resistant

Womb and Cosmos Aware

Superwoman and Little Spirit

Some of these dual ways of being or ways of perceiving yourself form a combination of thoughts that evoke facets of you. I am quite certain you could grow this list using your own ideas and energies. Am I right? Professional career, marriage, and children may surprise you and call forth additional self-parts to nurture. Each aspect that genuinely belongs to you will demonstrate the most patient essence in the Universe. Facets wait for their time because they carry an essence that came with your Soul. You are much more than you appear, even to yourself.

Allow play to be your trickster. Play with art, acrobatics, dance, music-making, singing, and martial arts to engage the imagination of your body. Your body-mind is fuel for your intuition, and connects with Source to remind you who you were born to be. Yes, it's very true, you can be anything and anyone you choose to be, but I urge you to discover who you are first. That authenticity will surprise and reward you with luscious depths. Only the Elder women know this truth. Allow your true self to emerge in play, go on a treasure hunt for clues.

The culture needs to evolve so that you can continue to grow your Genius, so prepare yourself to be a cultural creative. The quality of the next 50 or 60 years of your life depends on how you take up this challenge. Although you do not need to go to college or remain in school unless that is in your heart, I invite you to dream your biggest dream.

The nurturing facet, caring for our physical selves with body-work is one of the easiest things women let slide when work and family begin to fill in available time. Your body practice might include yoga, walking meditation with prayer, running or martial arts, and weight lifting. You can get a great workout dancing and singing. So many different practitioners will help you find your own practice, but only intention will make it yours. I like to avoid getting in my car for body-work, so I lace up my boots or tennies and walk out the door.

Nine Passages for Women and Girls



A Sliver of Her Former Self

In the First Blood and again in the First Flight Passages, you learned how to use the Moon to guide your inner tracking. I invite you to keep up this habit, make it life-long: Write in your journal to see what flows out of your pen or crayons in freestyle, in a flow of consciousness. Let's take this up one or two levels now. The mystical Soul that came in at Birth longs to speak to you and through you. Quiet rhythms of your Moon practice have birthed spirituality, that which belongs to you and only you. The art that you do reveals first to your heart that which your Soul wants you to know. Play with art and include la Luna, these are the warp and weft you weave with on your life loom.

For subtle inner body-work, deepen your work with your chakras. This is energy work and opens your inner core beliefs as a guide for senses sight, hearing, and especially felt-sense. Chakra work is body-work that reveals your inner energy world. As pure energy, chakras can be sensed as open or closed, as flowing or blocked. If you reach 20 or 25 without knowing about your inner energy system, then you grew up sheltered as I did. I learned about the chakra system through girlfriends whispering in yoga class and laughing while soaking in hot springs. Consider this scene, girlfriends, hot springs, chakra; it must be

kundalini energy that made us all laugh. Well, that was how I was introduced. When my curiosity is engaged, I dive into books.

Already you know I have a curious nature and for years I practiced with the chakra totem pole I introduced in the First Blood Passage. Then my old friend and teacher, Kathleen, taught me how to move that playful energy through the central channel. She called this ‘running energy.’ That opened my understanding and my felt sense of chakras. Then I searched out all the information I could find.

This body-work with your subtle energy system invites creative juices to flow into and through your power and heart and visioning centers, your seven internal chakras. Our bodies are dense and we accumulate stress; without a working awareness of the flow of energy, one or more of these energy centers can become blocked. Have you ever felt stuck?

This is a brilliant, built-in system for understanding yourself energetically. As an ancient gift, chakra roots go back thousands of years to the origin of yoga. When you devote yourself to a regular practice, a switch will slowly turn on to reveal your whole inner life. Your felt-self will literally pulse with new energy when your centers are flowing clear.

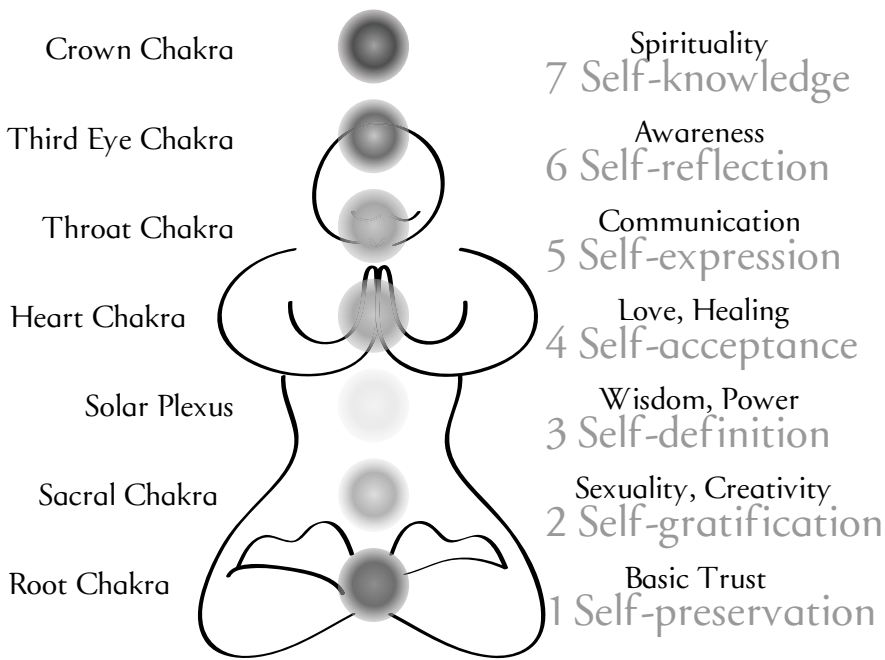
Since this awakening began inside of me, I have learned how beauty and power deliver transformative energy to initiations, helping to complete a Passage on time and not become stuck. In these last years of chakra work, I have kindled an internal creative revolution. I became curious about the Goddesses found throughout the women’s cultures of the world. These spiritual figures and archetypal teachers found in art and texts might be endlessly fascinating for you.¹⁰

Practice is a word women use to cover a wide variety of topics. Deeply engrained habits like a yoga practice may or may not include lighting a candle, a piece of smudge, or a long meditation. Your woman’s practice may use inner creativity to discover what you feel about what you say on paper, in art, or a

blend of those two. It may be purely somatic like running, trance dancing, or Qigong. For your Womanhood Bloom, your inner practice provides a personal forum where your wild self and your many other facets can contribute to your whole self. Use your personal list of facets to do this good work on yourself.

In my daily practice, I meditate with breath and with a particular Goddess on my mind, chanting silently. When I sense the awakening of my spinal fluid, I know that is chakra energy. With my quiet mind, I observe the inner spiral, the kundalini coil at the base of my spine. My mind is often turned-on high in the morning, so I use the salve of patience and forgiveness to set aside my thinking mind.

The chakra energy centers can be meditated on singly or as a shooting little fireball of energy from the base of your spine up and out the top of your head. Chakras influence your self-regard which is my reason for bringing them to your attention. I am not the teacher and want you to know that others know more than I can possibly know. My practice with the chakras began very playfully in 1995 with my first awakening. Chakra teachings are still on the edge of our culture. Many good things come in very slowly. You can intuit the energy invited by your intention. The basic instructions and oldest Eastern teachings of the chakras are described in Judith Anodea's book, *Eastern Body Western Mind*.¹¹



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When you dive in deeper, your inner world of subtle energies will reveal more information about subtle aspects of yourself. Seven in all, these aspects, from self-preservation up through self-knowledge are neatly packaged along your spine as chakra centers with renewable energies that will offer you a lifetime of inquiry, observation, and guidance. Use these seven aspects in your journal art. These subtle energies offer you a map for self-discovery. I practice to transform stuck energy into flowing energy. Notice how subtle these flowing energies relate to your Moontimes, to continuous change, worldly discoveries, to core beliefs, and your potential for greater maturity.

You alone are responsible for the ritual life you lead and how your spirituality awakens in you. Do you use ritual in the quiet of morning or light a candle in the evening to awaken your subconscious, maybe both times? When can you imagine meditation working for you, morning, afternoon, or night? Anytime you sit on a yoga mat is the perfect opportunity to begin conscious-

Nine Passages for Women and Girls

ly moving energy for balance, for juiciness, and for endless self-exploration. Beautiful and wise Janis puts it this way, “Relax. Be comfortable. Breathe deeply. Be still. This is meditation.”

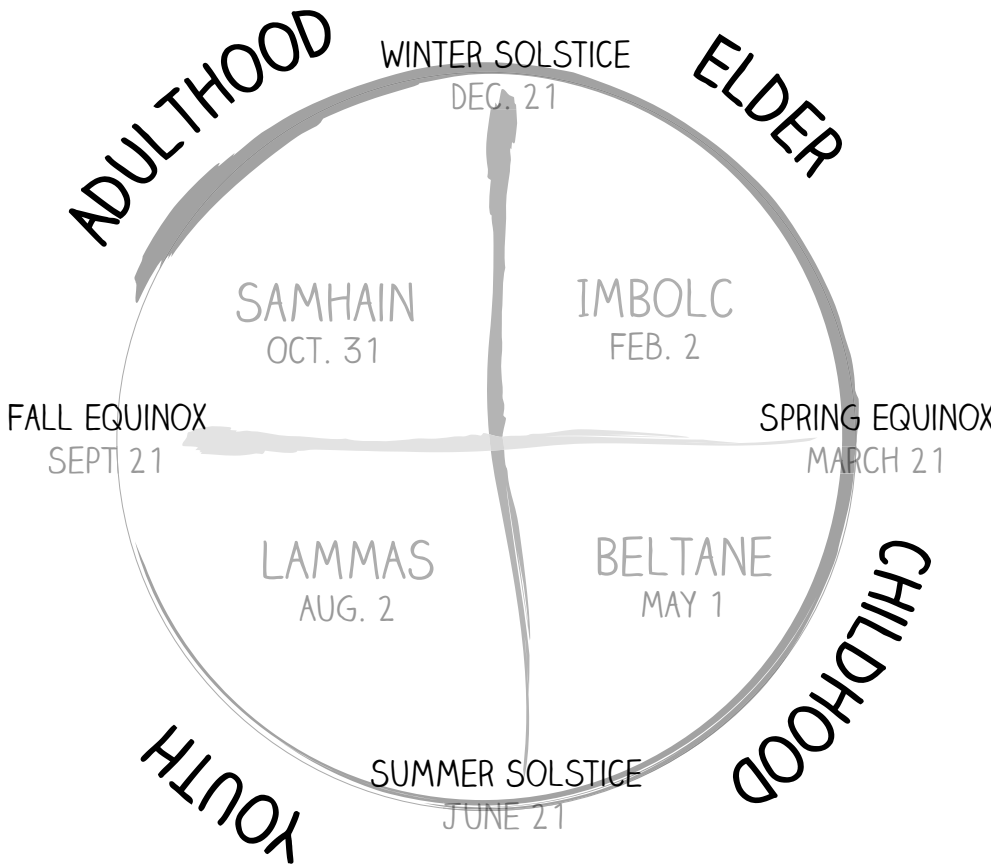


Prayer Ceremonies for 8 Holy Days Marking the Seasons

CONNECTIONS

As I write, the cross-quarter day for quickening is dawning. I invite you to know the seasons and their cultural gifts. I offer healing prayers for the Earth and on the eight days of seasonal celebration, I do ceremony with my Earth sisters. The seasons offer another map for going deeper with ritual. Winter Solstice begins winter and Summer Solstice begins summer. In all of South America, Africa, Australia, and all geographic locations south of the equator, the seasons are exactly opposite the Northern Hemisphere. On the Equinoxes, all peoples experience the Earth with no tilt. In the northern hemisphere, the Vernal Equinox marks spring and the Autumnal Equinox marks the beginning of fall. In between these four days you will notice four more days mark the center of each season: Imbolc on February 2, Beltane on May

1, Lammas on August 2, and Samhain on October 31. Each season is 90 days long. By observing cross-quarter days, women all around the world observe how these enormous Earth changes help us build our communities. Ritual ceremony is prevalent in Earth-based cultures. As lovers of ceremony, many women have overlaid this map into their spiritual lives.



WHEEL AND SEASONS OF LIFE

I find oracles, often called divination tools, endlessly fascinating for seeing deeper inside my nature. Honestly, these are great fun to use in small groups: Oracles offer intimacy, as in into-me-see. They help women friends see deeper into one another's true natures. This requires a certain level of vulnerability. Brené Brown¹² encourages every opportunity to live our lives daringly. The deeper inquiries of oracles are playful but they also require vulnerability between girlfriends. Expect aha's to come, those you will want someone to witness.

I track la Luna with an overlay of Astrology because the information available is uncanny, persistent like the Moon and often accurate. I find that speaking this language of the Cosmos gives me a sense of knowing I am part of something very big and powerful. Astrological newsletters come into my email inbox, I like to learn about the planets and cosmic relationships. Wouldn't you like to be surprised to raise your own awareness in this way?

When the Moon crosses into and out of certain astrological signs, I notice my biorhythms engage with Earth and Water signs differently than with Air and Fire signs. Each Moon phase gives energy of initiating or completing. Almost every day offers an energetic and psychic twist from a planet influence. You might enjoy looking for the psychic, emotional surprise waiting to be discovered through this cosmic dance.

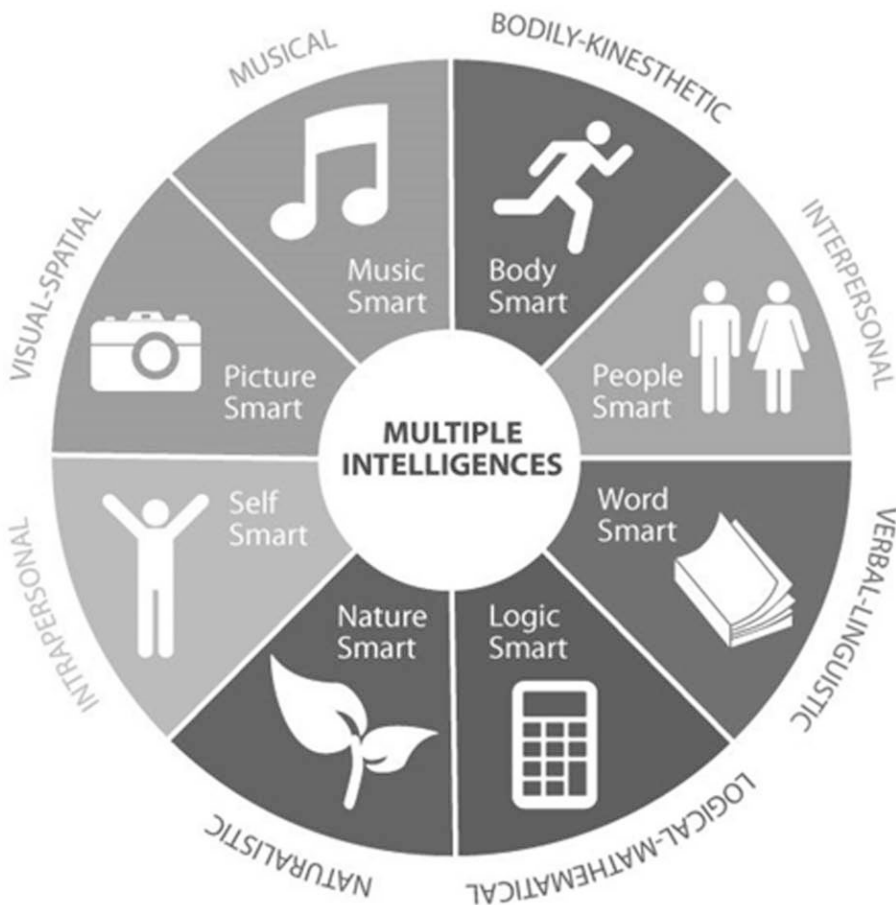
Do you see this layering? I use my attention for a quick check-in to see if one of my chakras has been engaged by planetary action. This is inner knowledge, accessible to you, only by you. It's personal and enriching.

When I am searching for inspiration or an answer, I will draw Tarot cards and do a spread. I like to draw Animal Cards; I have read those for years because I have lived on the edge of the wild and often see animals. Do you wonder about these oracles? Besides Tarot, many women play with Runes and read the I Ching. The broad purpose of these oracles is to reveal more about your inner facets; what would you like to know more about? Who are you,

separate from your family, your career, and your partner?

EMBRACE SPIRIT AND SOUL

Look into the squinty eyes of any Coyote Elder and you will discover that we like to present challenges. In the East the teachers provide koans, in our culture, we offer irresistible challenges. Like Nature's law of elasticity, using these personal enrichment oracles will strengthen your intuition. You have opened your core beliefs, you have learned the value of chakras and oracles, now let's layer in how you learn new things that will tie these all together.



Women-centered Learning: Dialogue, Intuition, Relationships, Connections, Gift Exchanges

Depending on your personal wiring, some of your teachers seemed more inspirational than others. Give thanks for all who brought you this far, shaped you, added something to your quiver, and sharpened your assessment skills. Now you will become your own teacher. Hopefully, you understand which of the multiple intelligences work best for you. This has been taught for several decades, but is worth a look since growth is your focus. Learn how you grow your body-mind. Update what you learned in school.

The totally unique way you acquire new knowledge is powerfully serious and great fun to discover. However you blend these various energies of learning and knowing into a daily practice for health and growth, defining a personal system will create your own true map for change. Choosing how you use these learning systems will give you depth and maturity. As the years progress, you will discover that women become more unique, not more alike.

By creating a design for myself, I became more valuable to myself; my curiosity has remained engaged far beyond school. I am fairly certain your method of learning differs from mine and from your sisters'. To solidify learning new material, reading reinforces writing. These two ways of acquiring utterly new information can then be reinforced physically, often through walking and talking. I seem to need Nature to collaborate with, and find myself sharing with stones, water, wildlife and birds. Eventually, I share my writing with all my friends, but I work it through my personal design first.

How do you learn something you consider difficult? Skills and knowledge freely shared is one of the great secrets to strong friendships. What are your personal methods for learning on a deeper level? Your quiet reflection on these questions will reveal that knowledge is power and change comes through both.

As long as there have been cultures of women, we have shared learning maps like these and the chakras to make us endlessly fascinating to one another. Look at the relationships you might discover between these systems. With your Genius, you can create something entirely new.

RELATIONSHIPS OFFER FLOWING ENERGY

Be a culture-maker, be the one who shares all that you are learning. When I talk about sharing I mean, enrich your girl-gang. In my 20s, my work friends were my gang. In my 30s, my best friend was a bachelor who simply loved women and was looking for his special one. We were friends, and even though he crossed in 2001, I consider him my friend still and talk to him sometimes. I learned about girl-gangs around the time I adopted one. With my women friends, I feel safe and surrounded by love, forgiveness, laughter, which produces a juice in me that I call thriving. I have worked to create a Village where all of us have adopted one another like family. Through my 20s and 30s, I migrated all over this beautiful country, moving and seeking my place of belonging. When I found my place, I knew I belonged because my girl-gang lives here. I was quickly embraced! Home means hugs and laughs in great abundance.

Of all the ways you can know yourself, relationships offer you the very best mirrors. In the process of mirroring, you see your shadow in the face of the other. You do not need to like every bit of another woman to like her a lot. Remember this wisdom about shadow: Often the part of another that you really do not like is a shadow part of yourself. Mirroring is a reflection freely offered for you to look deeper. This mirror may help you out-grow some part you no longer need. Maybe you and your friend can talk about it and work through the edginess; this is known as peacemaking. Give an edgy feeling your gift of introspection.

Sex, lust, and heated affairs are such a part of the culture now, I see we were probably never without sexuality, but in my lifetime, it opened gradually like a flower. There were times when flirting was a high art and could be brought back. These are ways to get to know yourself, sometimes you will discover you really want to know the other, your partner in the affair. Be kind and gentle, be playful, become friends who share and you will find a different kind of mirror for learning something new about yourself. Qualities emerge in

a life partner that will fine tune acceptance and tolerance in you, for example.

Rarely are women successful enough or powerful enough to change another; find the change inside of yourself or find another life partner. Trust the mirror of your beloved relationship for all that feels triggered inside of you. That includes growth, understanding, challenges, and change. Sometimes the spark becomes a flame, sometimes the great wind flutters back into a mere breeze. Look for the Nature metaphors and take your questions into your Moontime, your answers can be found in the quiet. I live with a Lion, a true Alpha, and when he stirs, I merely turn sideways and allow all that wind to blow past me. I have learned so much about myself in this love affair with my Lion-hearted man.

Some people are simply not part of my Soul-cluster and I am glad to know that. What if I was truly a stone rolling, gathering moss and closely tracking every person I met? Oh my goodness. I have known many people who cannot love me without overlaying their judgments. I wish them well, I send them along with love. I hope this example will teach you to love as well as you can love and find yourself growing through mirroring with your friends, that you may find and know your true friends.

Accept, encourage, and create change; this is how you live harmoniously with your true Divine nature and with Nature herself. Invite your gang, your Women's Circle to join you outside beneath a tree. Talk about change, talk about systems, open your core beliefs and learn something new.

With my Women's Circle intact, I feel a safe sense of belonging even if we do not see one another for weeks. I have been able to finally heal some of my sexual wounds and talk about promiscuity openly. I knew I was home once I was able to step through the wall of shame around my secrets and talk openly and freely. This is the value of true girlfriends. Authentic relationships provide a feeling of deep belonging where you feel responsible for kinship because good healthy relationships go both ways. In giving and receiving, you feel both enriched and generous.

Notice how change flowed beautifully and gracefully through childhood. You remember being a fairy princess and a dragon, getting dirty, exploring the land, climbing a mountain, and rolling down grassy slopes. You do, don't you? Remember getting pubic hair and breast buds, and feeling how those marked womanhood as they grew fuller? You have changed over the years and didn't think a thing about it when you were a child of Nature, a child of the world. Now you are a woman for sure, you have a woman's body a woman's spirit, and a woman's brain with supernatural powers. I hope you invite change and love change; it's your attitude about change that you control, not change itself.

Finally, before I step you across the Threshold, I want to help you find perspective about work. Women find work through what emerges and connects with heart strings and/or meets our needs. You may have a dozen different jobs to finance your basic needs and your personal discoveries. Like all other ways of acquiring knowledge, the world of paid employment can be like stepping stones that offer you different gifts. Work forms an ecology around you long enough to be an external force that shapes you and changes you. In return for your talents and the juice of your life, you offer conscious power to shape the organization.

Remember to return to your personal 10,000-hour project. Mastery includes confidence and self-esteem; what two *ideas or energies* can you weave together to make something the world has never before seen? If you are on purpose with the enthusiasms of your heart, what you learned during your teens plays directly into this second half of your adolescence, your 20s.

From your Eagle's view, put wholeness up on a pedestal, use the assessment skills of your finely tuned brain to look at your mind, body, spirit, and Soul. Examine your motives. Notice how your New Moon intentions shape your month. Play with your internal multidimensional, multilayered, theme-park to discover who you really are inside. Be open, be curious, and be creative!

Before we bid your decade of growth adieu, I offer a couple of Coyote assignments. Begin to write your play history. You will want to track this through the next decade of your life, begin now. Write your sexual history, for your eyes

only and prepare to adjust your attitude as maturity settles around your heart.

Finally. I have used the metaphor of trees, liberally and visually in this Passage. Here is another one you might use to begin an art project called your Tree of Life. Free-form this thought, you need only a few sparks from me. Do you hang your values, your events, your shadow-lights on the tree?

WOMANHOOD BLOOM THRESHOLD

Women's initiations are slightly more common than other Passage rituals because of the conscious awakening of women. As a long-time advocate for women, I can say this ceremony is crucial for women's evolution. In order for this Threshold to serve well, women need to gain the Eagle's perspective about life. Claim the heroine's crossroad where struggle meets joy. Process the past and its grief with Death rituals, releasing each Threshold including Birth. You know well the babe you were, the girl and big girl. You also know the pubescent maiden and the darling who gave her virginity to an experience. Since then, your growth has been exponential, year by year. A rattle and a drum will serve you to hold a ceremony of release, a Death ritual for the illusory nature of your former personas.

Rituals observed outside the box of time, relaxed with senses engaged, reveal this deeper truth: We all deserve to observe and to feel our maturity. Personal evolution differs from the science of evolution. The sheer effort to become an upright and fully functional human being is beyond understanding. So many forces, so much testing, hundreds of relationships, thousands of experiences have shaped you and each one was necessary. We can join hands and smile from the inside of this Eagle's perspective, only you know the whole truth. By releasing the element of time, we women gain access to our Soul-selves and Genius-selves. This will call forth the gifts that Gaia needs now, gifts of exalted and Initiated women. You have never been more needed in the web of life.

This Passage Threshold marks the end of adolescence and wraps a ribbon around the bundle of joys and sorrows of the human variety. As a marker

for maturity, the Threshold appears because you as Initiate have done your work. Spiritually understanding the crossroad ahead, an Initiate acknowledges that change is a force of Nature. At least one year past the Threshold will be needed to integrate this spiritual experience. Enjoy the peaceful pull and the comfort of knowing just enough for now. Failing to cross this Threshold would cause arrested development. Even with a Death ritual to bring up the fire of transformation and release the past, no pain compares to stagnant growth.

Be the inviter: Invite your Mentor, invite the Elders and the Youngers who create the constellation of your community. Ask for the help you need. Women who initiate receive support through the processing of their life experiences.

The community needs this ceremony, because for everyone participating or watching, this Passage celebration reveals the future potential for their own personal growth.

Our collective purpose is growth and its natural extension, maturity. By the time a woman has grown into and learned to challenge her fully mature brain, she has discovered the power within accumulating skills and experiences. She has made friends with her body by practicing self-care. A well mentored young woman will have completed at least one and possibly two 10,000-hour projects to master her gifts and reveal her Genius. Perhaps Mothering has become her project. With the help of many other women, she will have become a heroine to herself. She will feel confident, brilliant, strong, and clear about her direct connection to her Soul. Her Genius has fully awakened when she reaches out to younger women to give back what she received from her Mentors.

In this giving back for all we glean from life, initiations breathe new life into all women. Through a spirit of generativity and reciprocity, young women and Elders remain connected to vitality and evolution. Guiding adolescents into fully blooming women is psychically joyful and satisfying.¹³

Each woman I have guided through this Womanhood Bloom Passage

Nine Passages for Women and Girls

has been my teacher. My own process has been sometimes clumsy; I admit, very willing Initiates have taught me a powerful amount. By using the dust of our Ancestors and their imagined or real lives, women are teaching women how to be courageous and interdependent. In this reincarnation, I am the Elder guide, the trickster determined to bring Rites of Passage back to the culture in my lifetime.

AN HONORING: RACHEL'S STORY



Womanhood Bloom Threshold

A gift came to me and I knew her as a blessing when I saw her. In my mind's eye, I can still see her coming up my driveway; she is Rachel Ruach at 32. After a series of women's ceremonies and a profound Vision Quest, and

after deep trainings with the Nature Connection community in California, she decided to walk to Idaho. When her original idea didn't meet her expectations, Rachel cleared her head and chose again. She came to me in an honoring way, a number of respected Elder men had directed her me. Laden with emerging gifts of her own and a finely tuned spirit connection, she carried the bare bones, the beginning of a cultural map for women's growth and maturity, a map for initiation and spiritual evolution specific to the Divine Feminine rising in the world, now.

Intertwined around this special introduction, I had helped lift up a circle of women who called ourselves the Inland Northwest Women's Council. Rachel was one of our early presenters. I had seen the outline of her cultural map and recognized both its luminance and its promise. She was giving birth to something new. She held great hopes for her gift: *A Cultural Map for Women's Rites of Passage*.

Rachel asked me for a Womanhood initiation for herself. She was the first to honor me in this way. I felt my cells awaken to the challenge that her question posed. I needed to extrapolate all that I had learned from many First Blood ceremonies for girls. This was a sign of growth for me and I said, "Yes, absolutely, who can help us?" Personally, this is true to my way of being with the spirit of Earth's women, I always say yes to their requests for spiritual assistance, I say yes to ceremonies. I never hesitate.

"First, I need help planting a field of wildflowers." I saw the need for relationship building. I never charge for ceremony even though a positive response on my part requires that I set aside at least two months for preparation, for dreaming the creation, for going deeper into needs and wants, and to listen to the spirit of the endeavor. Then I need two more Moons to find a new normal for myself and discover the deeper teachings within. Initiation is such a powerful force, time is needed to embrace the essence of the woman, to gather the community for support, and to align myself to energies stirred that need to be contained. Planting seeds would support both of our journeys.

Nine Passages for Women and Girls

We arranged to meet next in a driving rainstorm. We suited up to be outside, rainproof is particular to being in Nature so women may truly touch the wild within ourselves. Something new was going to emerge from a wheelbarrow completely full of good compost holding about a billion carefully collected wildflower seeds. My husband had planted a new arboretum, the trees were babies, the soil had been stirred and weeded once. Rachael came when I said, “Ready.” Soaking wet, I shared a little plan, “Spread evenly,” and winked as I handed her a shovel. For that wet and sacred moment when we both leaned on our shovels and looked into one another’s eyes, Rachael and I both knew we were planting the most important seeds of our lives. We could not imagine how those seeds would grow, but we could cooperate with Nature, open our hearts to receive the Earth’s gratitude for our care, and build our dreams with hope while we danced between the raindrops.



Across the Threshold, Friends Waited

A woman’s initiation summons the energy and gifts of transformation to enliven the holy Soul which wraps each cell in one’s body. Every bone cell, every heart cell, every neuro-transmitting cell will come through a transformative fire of change during an initiate’s first year. This is inner work which requires the deepest quiet, deserving silence. Once connected, the initiate finds, lying dormant, the silence is where the Divine Feminine lives. God and

Goddess, side by side, merge with a woman's Higher Self. Other forces and energies are ancestral, some are from current culture. How can anyone describe anyone else's holistic experience through change gifted from ritual and ceremony? What are the universal forces coming to assist?

Rachel and I were friended by the same wild woman, Lauren Gonsolves. I introduce her into this story for intersections needing to be honored. Lauren cleaned those seeds that went into our wheelbarrow, a billion, representing delightful wild woods adventures. Those seeds, gathered by me, cleaned by Lauren, planted by Rachel symbolized the mindful moments ahead when we would all be harvesting. We are more deeply connected, every single thing is really alive and connected. That is how Rachel and I began, with wildflower seeds, because they sprout underground in the winter.

A magnificent red-headed fiddler, Karen, stepped into the role as my assistant and began to meet with me and Rachel. Appropriate for women's most serious endeavors together, we met at a diner and planned over plates of food and hot tea. I felt like the stickler for logistics and safety, but once I was satisfied we had met those basic needs, Rachel was ready to step out into the wild to be alone. I shared the steps involved to complete a Rites of Passage in a good way: Severance, separating from her life for a time; crossing the Threshold into liminal time where the portal to the world beyond is accessible by silence and prayer. I would help with the last step, reincorporation, and would speak about that later.

Rachel's was a journey into herself, seeking the Divine, bonding and listening for the places where inspiration, intuition, and ancestral gifts intersected. Inviting change, using the liminal space between her wild camp and her little yurt home, she chose eleven deep winter days to be alone on White Mountain. This is perhaps the edgiest scenario I could have imagined.

In December, before the snow arrived, we hiked to her camp site. "Follow me," she said up a sheer rock face, decorated by lovely, emerald green moss. We dodged boulders that loosened, When I lingered, unable to find my

next step, the Fairies invited me to stay forever. The easy, vertical hike required focus to navigate, and delivered wonder at each step. It was a very beautiful location; I knew this place would offer deep visitations.

This Womanhood initiation of days and nights across the deepest northern winter, began long before I handed Rachel a shovel for seeds and looked into her eyes. It had been in both of us as a dream. She had searched for her sacred space and discovered a womb-like bed with a natural fire circle. When the three of us saw the space, it was not completely ready. Rachel said she would stack wood around two sides, perhaps a cord deep. Imaginatively, I could see where the tarp would go, where her body would curl into Earth's little curved bowl, and where she would sit in firelight contemplating her life.

Rachael's Soul was prepared to take a journey back in time and forward to now, the spiritual inheritance from her Ancestors was the longing in her Soul. Her seeking stretched far into the future of cultural change for women. In each moment, she would listen to discover how these two forces, past and present, shaped her future. She would have plenty to do, I didn't worry about that. She showed me a gallon jar of barley, for making her porridge each morning, to last her through the day. She hoped no predator would be attracted by the smell of grain. Karen and I, the Ancestors and Guardians, and Rachael herself, we would all hold a strong enough container for this whole-spirit work to be done in safety.

Still, we were all projecting on her behalf. Karen jiggled for the adventure, I did too. A younger version of myself felt the wild, the rush of adrenalin, and felt wonder for woman's deepest and unknowable mystery on Earth: Initiation and emergence through the darkest darkness. The February Full Moon had me on edge, either it would snow a foot or, with a crystal clear Moon-lit night, the wild animals would have a good visual fix on the camp. I knew the bears were hibernating, but wild cats, especially bobcats and mountain lions rarely sleep and often have a litter to feed through the hungry months. Those thoughts caused a worry, with my prayers I wove a spell around

the campsite. We all love wildcats, I had no doubt they would be nearby, it's the nature of her place on White Mountain.

We met at the trailhead, checked our logistics one more time, agreed on the day for closing the portal that had just opened to the spirit world. It was time for her departure ceremony, silence, rattle, last connection, pledging our devotion to this sacred time with our whole hearts, and Rachel was off on her own. Karen and I watched until the bravest of women reached the top of her skid trail, waved and disappeared. Eleven days suddenly seemed long, too long, an eternity.

A message tree doubled as a way-station for water, and taking turns with Karen, every single day a gallon was delivered. Miraculously, every single day a gallon was retrieved and the empty jug returned. When it was my turn to deliver the gallon, I drove 5 miles north of home and 3 miles west to the base of White Mountain. I hiked up that skid road previously used to slide down logs when conditions were right. It was cold, there was snow, but I didn't need snowshoes because no new snow had fallen. I reached the tree with some effort. I looked up at the rock face, I could sometimes detect Rachel's fire, usually not. Invisibility was key to her process.



Crossing Back across the Threshold

Karen and I provided a container for transformation, we held strong

and prayed we had done enough. That this story was created to be held by a community of women and told to our daughters is perhaps the highest purpose for any Rites of Passage experience. We draw from the mythology of transformation, using the same alchemical magic found in mythology and stories; then we go further, we make it personal, powerful, and intergenerational. When women go into themselves, in the deep interior quiet where silence mingles with possibility, Soul and Genius hear the invitation for an awakening. I could never really tell another's story; I paint the portrait of the space for the transformative fire of spirit to find the heart and Soul of a woman. With all my heart, I pray that Rachel tells this story occasionally, to inspire others. More fires live within her, more darkness, and more light. The seeds planted for this journey will ignite those new fires as her journey path discovers more maturity.

Since we had agreed on an end time, I invited everyone I knew who knew Rachel to come to her closing ceremony. Karen and April went to the message tree, gathered up Rachel in hugs and smiles. Then shushing each other, they blindfolded Rachel so she would return her focus to the drum of her own heart beat and find the blessed silence where she had become a tuning fork for the Womb of the Universe. Those 11 days, that is the story only Rachel can tell.

The three walked around the corner and arm-in-arm, slowly floated down the skid trail. A drum beat gave her Women's Circle waiting a connection to Great Mother and offered a grounding sound for Rachel to find her way back. Women had gathered at 7 a.m. on that February morning, sharing thermoses of hot tea. With a spirit blanket laid down to circle around, the raw Earth served as our altar, as always.

As a carrier of ritual, I knew this was the opportunity to plant another seed. I asked Rachel to be seated at the West edge and face the rising sun. Women gathered in close. I gifted her with a woman's power symbol to carry her memories in a large leather pouch, hand worked by a woman, decorated with tiny bells that would jingle a joyous sound. Then, as I placed a crown of

flowers on her head, clapped my hands together, and in my squinty old way, I announced the spiritual and psychic integration of all that she gathered up on her mountain will require at least one year ahead to fully understand.



Crowned and Gifted, Integration Begins

“Use this crown as your broomstick, because I know you are going to fly away now. Integration must begin, right here in your community. The final stage, reincorporation, will last up to 13 Moons and begins by you telling this communi-

ty of women something of your experience up there on White Mountain.”

She gasped, “Really?”

“Yes, we came to hear from you so you may plant the seed in our hearts. Share with us.”

This is where the rest of the story belongs to Rachel, but I can tell you her transformation was as peaceful as any fire can be. She accepted the ancestral gifts she had received from her mountain vigil and spent the next two weeks in her tiny yurt in seclusion, writing down all that had awakened in her. Rachel’s Soul had become a receiver of ancient wisdom, a gift from her Ancestors. Sitting on the blanket that morning, she told of messages she had received, some came to her in the original Hebrew language. Her Women’s Cultural Map is being refined and used in California as a guide for women’s journeys into themselves, including all of the mystery in Rites of Passage ceremonies.

One final ceremony wrapped our experiences together with a dazzling ending. Rachel came to the little cabin where I lived with my husband and cooked us a very fine meal. She put so much love into those preparations that I will always hold that occasion as the most sacred way this story could end. Even though this was a major life event for Rachel and me, it’s now enveloped and lives as a little story we once shared. Rites of Passage, in its most holy way, wraps all of one’s life experiences into a bundle, so the emptying, the release, the empty vessel, may be filled with fresh, new offerings from one’s Soul. This intentional swaddling, pausing in the liminal space to awaken and enliven herself, created a new stage for the dance of her life.

You see, this is not the end of the story, but the awakening of a woman’s true self. Enormously deep experiences filled Rachel’s bundle before she came to me. I only held them for her while she paused and emptied herself so new gifts could enter. With the buckskin pouch, she received back her previous bundle of experiences and launched her Womanhood Bloom in the transformative dream waiting to be delivered by her awakened Soul.



Glory of Initiation

Rachel Ruach's whole dream is now being held in Sonoma County, CA in a new container, *Infinite Wild* by name.¹⁴ She gifted me, you see, by seeing the Elder in me even before my own initiation. From her I received a symbol of our story, a perfectly round and hand-size knapping stone of brilliant black flint. When I need to remember my journey, I touch this stone in gratitude for being seen. One of the highest honors of my life, of all our lives, is to be seen. I bow in deep gratitude to all the tiniest seeds waiting for their time to bloom.

GIFTS FROM THE ELDERS: WOMANHOOD BLOOM

Your practice of watching the Moon, dancing with la Luna feels like breathing. You simply do it.

Your **Circle of Courage** becomes layered with values freshly minted through experiences. This action of *entelechy*, on the move, actively seeking your true potential, will help you track your Genius, your Soul-self, and all that it means to be human.

Remember the four foundation stones of early adolescence: **Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity**. Those four values practiced during your introduction to the **Circle of Courage**, laid down the first layer of self-awareness to help you understand risk.

Invent for yourself the simplest concepts to expand your sense of **Belonging**. Belonging attaches to place, as in knowing the place you live, and to the people who live with you in this place.

- * What other words, feelings, and values help describe belonging for you?

In seeking **Mastery**, your Genius is fully engaged. When you play with your Genius, you will find your purpose. This needs only your focused heart. Rise up in personal rebellion to defend your inner Genius.

- * What help do you need to express this Soul-essence of you?

Independence is a much bigger value than it first appears. What exactly does independence imply? Can you find self-reliance and financial security in there? How about adventure?

- * Ask a Mentor about interdependence.

If you direct the energy of **Generosity** inward, you will find care and warmth, along with silence and rest.

- * When you turn that energy outward, how might you be useful or in

some small way, in service to another?

Nature Connection: Why Nature? Nature is our primary home and our inspired teacher. Earth, where Nature is friend and Great Mother to all, provides our one and only home in this lifetime. What are your Gifts for Gaia, the ancient Goddess name for Earth?

Reclaim any Soul parts which you gave up to please someone else or gain approval. You need all of your parts to feel whole. Anything that hurts now, feelings, attitudes, memories, those still need to be healed.

Those compromises left your Soul out of the equation. Look deeper and deeper: Who will hold you while you do this inner searching?

You become your own Medicine Woman. This psychic healing process reveals to you the wonders of your inner life. Do whatever it takes!

* What activity moves you closer to your bliss?

You may discover that you inherited feelings of pain and general emotional patterns. Keep only what belongs to you. The seeds of your past become your present; the seeds of your present become your future.

You only need to believe in what you most love to do and have always loved. That is why you are here on Earth right now. Look into all of the facets of your passion and you will find your Soul. To locate your Genius, this is where you begin

* What gives you such joy you can only call it play?

* What do you love?

* How does it all fit around your core beliefs?

Be watchful for Divine guidance: How the right guide at just the right time comes to you or crosses your path may also be an interesting story—coincidence, fate, or merely mystery.

Teachers: Inner and Outer: Listen to your dreams before you leave your bed, make a record. What resonates from this deep subconscious part of you? Pay close attention to your Moon.

I ask this question to surprise you: What trouble can you get into that will teach you about your shadow self? Sometimes the characteristics or tendencies which reveal the darker side of your nature will become great personal teachers.

- * Exactly what do you dislike and why?
- * What do you fear and why?

For subtle body-work, begin to work with your chakras. This is energy work and opens your inner core beliefs to guide your senses, sight, hearing, and especially your felt-sense, your emotions. Chakra work is body-work that reveals your inner energy world. As pure energy, chakras can be sensed as open or closed, as flowing or blocked. Remember, chakras are a brilliant, built-in system for understanding yourself energetically.

- * You alone are responsible for the ritual life you lead and how your spirituality awakens.
- * Do you use ritual in the quiet of morning or light a candle in the evening to awaken your sub-conscious, maybe both times?
- * When can you imagine meditation working for you, morning, afternoon, or night?

When I am searching for inspiration or an answer, I will draw Tarot cards and do a spread. Do you wonder about these oracles? Besides Tarot, many women play with Runes and read the I Ching. Their purpose is to reveal inner facets.

- * What would you like to know more about?
- * Who are you, separate from your family, your career, and your partner?

Skills and knowledge freely shared are among the great secrets to strong friendships.

- * How do you learn something you consider difficult?
- * What are your personal methods for learning on a deeper level?

NOTES FOR THE WOMANHOOD BLOOM PASSAGE

- 1 Paul Shepard (1925-1996) was an early influence on my thinking about human ecology and the life cycle. By reading his major works, I learned about evolution, my place in the Universe and humans' place coming from the wild to make culture. Shepard's books demonstrate how our cultural consciousness has developed and matured as have we as a species of thinking animals. *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (1973); *Thinking Animals: Animals and the Development of Human Intelligence* (1978); *Nature and Madness* (1982); and *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human* (1996).
- 2 Neurologist Daniel J. Siegel wrote *Mindsight* (2010) and many other books to teach about the workings of our brain. He wrote this one to inform adolescents about the power of mind and intention to re-sculpt neuro-pathways; this information is transformative at any age in life.
- 3 An African folktale, *Maggots and Gold* is retold and preserved for our psyches to plumb the depths of our shadows, by Michael Meade in *Fate and Destiny* (2010). In the shadows, we find the true gold.
- 4 A Mentor at a turning point in my life, Rick Medrick, took this one teaching about the small space right in front of me to teach a profound meditation technique. Studying the Earth is a delightful and soulful way to take your mind off yourself. I am amused at the Divine Masculine influences I have claimed as Mentors. Rick Medrick also gave me the word *entelechy* as a seed thought and it grew.
- 5 Most of my Mentors have been my wise women friends beginning with the original, Kathleen Bjorkman Wilson. Our spirits visit often, like the two little statues sitting around in Nature. Mentors need not be older, Kathleen is 50 days younger, but has always displayed an ancient wisdom and I am the beneficiary. Listen to the women, profound truths may be harvested from talks and walks in Nature.
- 6 At a psychological symposium in 1995, I heard Larry Brendtro speak about his new book, *Reclaiming Youth at Risk* (1990). Co-authored with two colleagues, Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern, the foundation created around Circle of Courage has widely dispersed the principles of this Native American model for youth development.
- 7 Once in a while a woman crosses your path that you must hold on to, with all your heart, forever. This is how it was when I met Diana Eldridge in 1991. She continues to evolve how she shows up for me, as saint, savior, and wise woman, we've moved from great need to great love.
- 8 The Genius Project is a contribution of the Mosaic Foundation led by Michael Meade. From the website, mosaicvoices.org, "Each person carries a unique way of seeing the world, and it is this rich diversity of perspectives and styles, talents and aptitudes that is the greatest resource we have as a global community when it comes to facing our greatest challenges."
- 9 Kimberlie Jean Gridley was in the first group of Initiates who helped with the groundwork for *Nine Passages*. *Soul Stories* was drafted while her initiation story unfolded.

- 10 Marija Gimbutas (1921–1994), a Lithuanian–American archeologist, introduced me to the Goddess through women studies programs. Through the 1990's, many scholarly women referenced her groundbreaking book, *The Language of the Goddess* (1989). Marija's excavations from Neolithic times introduced Goddess first from an academic perspective and left my imagination to unlock the spiritual mystery. Donna Reed directed and Starhawk wrote *Signs Out of Time: The Life of Archeologist Marija Gimbutas* (2004) an accessible video on YouTube about her life and work.
- 11 In 1996, Anodea Judith published her classic book about chakras: *Eastern Body Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System as a Path to the Self*. She offers lots of experiential workshops through www.sacredcenters.com/.
- 12 Brené Brown, a graduate professor in Social Work from the University of Houston, has changed the face of shame, vulnerability, worthiness, courage, and showing yourself to your community. Backed by amazing research, she continues to publish her discoveries in consumable form. *The Gifts of Imperfection* (2010); *Daring Greatly* (2015) both meant for self-discovery and *Rising Strong* (2015) bring the conversation into the wider spheres where life revolves around others—home, work, church, and community service.
- 13 In *The Life Cycle Completed: Extended Version* (1998) Erik H. Erikson and Joan M. Erikson posthumously published the ninth stage, an elaboration of their famous theory about the life stages. By the time I came across these stages of psychosocial development they were practically a cultural belief, although more will continue to be revealed. As generativity is understood, Elders and Youngers collaborate through mentoring to make the lives of both better.
- 14 I am pleased to pass along the website showcasing Rachel's work with women, <http://www.infinitewild.org/>

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.