

WALKING IN LIGHT

the Everyday
Empowerment
of a Shamanic Life

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sounds true
BOULDER, COLORADO



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P A R T
1

BEING *a* SHAMAN

I INVITE YOU TO GET COMFORTABLE. Start by taking a few deep, cleansing breaths. Notice how breathing deeply leads you to feeling more grounded and centered. As you continue to take some deep breaths imagine these breaths dissolving your distracting thoughts, thoughts of the day, events in your life that might be weighing on you. Imagine moving your energy from your head down into your heart. Put your hands on your heart and breathe. Take a deep breath in, pause. Exhale slowly. Repeat this and connect with your heartbeat. As you do this, feel your connection with the Earth. Experience your connection with your Self—who you are beyond your skin and your mind. Connect with your Self that is a source of stability and permanence, balance and peace. Feel your connection with your Self and the Earth, and the Spirit of the Land where you live.

Shamans perceive everything that exists as alive and as having a spirit. The land where you live is alive too. Connect your heartbeat with the

heartbeat of the Earth. Shamanism is a path of the heart, and in this section I will be speaking to your heart, not to your mind.

Now, as you relax and connect with your inner world, feel what you love about life, the preciousness of life. When we really love life and feel passion and meaning for life, that love will always light our way. Love and passion for life always acts as a beacon lighting the way through any challenge you might experience. Feel your love of life by reflecting on something that is precious to you. This might be something in nature; it might be a child you love, a family member, a favorite animal, or a favorite flower. Place the image, the feeling, the sound, or the fragrance of what you love into your heart and breathe deeply, connecting with yourself and the Earth.

Take a few deep breaths and bring your awareness back into the room. You are now ready to learn about helping spirits and the art of shamanic journeying. There is a variety of helping spirits who will share their guidance and support as you step forth on the path of living a shamanic life.

1

Ceremony and Doorways to Access the Hidden Realms

PERFORMING CEREMONIES IS AN IMPORTANT part of life in shamanic communities. Ceremonies are a way for people living in community to support each individual and the collective. It is a way for us as humans to connect with the spiritual world and create a relationship and interaction between the visible and invisible realms. Oftentimes people in Western cultures fear performing ceremonies as we are not taught about the power and how and why they are created. Ceremony remains mysterious to us, and we often fear what we do not understand. For some people, ceremony is too associated with religion, and they might reject having to engage in that form of work, which has no personal meaning for them.

That said, ceremonies have been used in shamanic cultures since the beginning of time. They have been seen as a powerful agent of change and a way for communities to gather together. Through ceremony we set an intention into motion. This opens up a door into the invisible realms where the “as within” meets the “as without,” creating a resonant energy that leads to change. Ceremony creates a relationship between humans and the creative forces of the universe where intention leads to an action that manifests as change in the physical world. Through ceremony the shaman divines information and performs healing on behalf of individuals in need. Ceremony is also used to honor important rites and passages and transitions in life, to call in

a desired outcome, and to release energies and states of consciousness that no longer serve the individuals and the community at large.

Throughout *Walking in Light* you will learn how to perform divination and healing ceremonies for yourself. You will learn how to create ceremonies where you are not following rules and instructions, rather you will be creating ceremonies that have personal meaning for you. You will also explore how to enrich your spiritual life by living each day as a ceremony. In this way you weave the sacred into your ordinary reality. Sometimes people engage in spiritual practices believing that by doing so they will be protected from the challenges of life. But please remember that life brings you situations to help you grow and evolve. Neither ceremony nor helping spirits will protect you from the challenges of life. Spiritual practices give you the tools to deal with what life brings for you. The challenges start to wear your ego and mind down, and your body gets tired. This allows your spirit to shine through, lighting the way. Your inner spirit has the strength to carry you through. The key is strengthening your connection with your inner spirit.

Shamanic work moves you from operating from the small *will*. This is the egoic will where you try to force movement in your life. Surrender opens you to the big *WILL*. This is your inner spirit—divine self. Once you surrender to *WILL*, you find yourself living a spiritually driven life. This leads to experiencing your inner shaman, for you cannot operate out of fear and live from a place of spirit at the same time.

Part of doing your personal work is learning how to live from your heart and be guided through life by your heart and your strong eye—where you have access to your intuition. You cannot sleep through the challenges life presents you with. And you cannot power through with the strength of only your body and mind. The strength of your spirit will carry you through.

Many of us wonder if life is going to get easier for us. It depends on what you choose—following the stream of ego or choosing spirit. You must develop a strong connection with your divine light, source, and inner spirit. Once you do that, you will then be able to surrender to the strength of your spirit. You will feel like you are truly being carried by

spirit through life. You will feel more graceful as you ride the river of life. As you learn through experience to trust your inner spirit and inner guidance along with the support from your helping spirits, the more you will feel empowered in your daily life and experience the inner transformation that will be reflected back to you in the outer world.

A core principle in spiritual teachings is that our outer world is a reflection of our inner state of consciousness. The esoteric teaching “as above, so below; as within, so without” is also a shamanic understanding. Changing your inner landscape through ceremony transforms you, and your outer world will reflect those changes back to you. You will feel empowered in your daily life. You begin to be guided by spirit instead of just following your ego. You start to ride a different wave of life than you have been riding before, and you begin to feel harmonious and peaceful inside. This creates healing for yourself and also in the world, for harmony within always creates harmony without. Each “ceremony,” each change in consciousness you make, ripples throughout the entire web of life.

CREATING CEREMONY

When you set aside the time and put in the physical effort to perform a ceremony indoors or in nature, you will notice a potency to the work. In performing a ceremony your body gets engaged. Your mind has to design the ceremony. You need to collect supplies and find the right place to perform the ceremony and set up sacred space. Your inner spirit is present, carrying you through and supporting you. There is a focus created in performing a ceremony where body, mind, and spirit join together and engage with concentration and focus to create a desired outcome. Ceremonies have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

BEGINNING

The beginning is designing the ceremony, collecting the tools you need, and creating sacred space. You have to prepare yourself so that

you are entering into the Dreamtime as you perform your ceremony. Setting a strong intention for your ceremony is key to creating a positive outcome.

There might be something special you want to wear such as sacred clothes, a scarf, belt, or special jewelry. This is a way of stepping out of your ordinary life and entering into the world of spirit. When shamans wear their costumes during ceremonies, it is a way to move from an egoic state into being one with the power of spirit. Here are some other ways to prepare:

Take some time to be in silence reflecting on your intention.

Sing and dance to move your ego aside and let the power of spirit shine through you.

You can drum and rattle to shift out of an ordinary state of consciousness.

You can place sacred objects at your ceremonial site to support your work.

Use your imagination. This is a time to call in and welcome your helping spirits and all the spiritual allies who you wish to honor for their presence in witnessing your work. Welcoming the helping spirits is a way to be courteous as you invite them to be partners with you in your work. When I lead ceremonies, I use some variation of the guided meditation to welcome and honor the helping spirits that I will share with you in chapter 2. You are welcome to use this example in your own ceremony and to adapt it as seems appropriate to you and your intention.

MIDDLE

Performing the actual ceremony is the middle. You can design a simple ceremony, or you can create a more elaborate one. Through experience

you might notice that performing a simple ceremony feeds your soul. Performing an elaborate ceremony can keep you tied to your mind. There isn't a right or wrong way to perform a ceremony. Ceremony is an action done with intention. The inherent power of ceremony is to act out your strong intention by concentrating on your intention while performing actions and holding a very strong focus. You do not want to make your ceremony so complex that you end up losing your concentration and focus.

Some people read a letter or poem they have written to the spirits. There are those who burn a piece of paper, an act that states an intention they wish to release into the universe. Others drum and sing as they focus on a desire they wish to manifest. In this book, you will find suggestions for activities you can perform during ceremonies for different purposes.

I find that many people are afraid of performing ceremonies as they fear they might do something wrong. The keys to performing a successful ceremony are calling in your helping spirits through intention and holding your intention of what you wish the outcome of your ceremony to be.

ENDING

The end is a time of closure and stating that the work is done. When you feel complete, let the helping spirits know that your work is done for now. This is a way to honor the helping spirits who have been working in partnership with you. It is simply a matter of courtesy to thank them and say that the work done. This is accomplished by thanking the elements and all the spiritual forces that held you in love and witnessed your transformation and healing. You can leave sacred offerings in gratitude to all the spiritual allies who worked with you in partnership. Returning to an ordinary state of consciousness helps you to fully end the ceremony while feeling grounded at the same time.

When you end your ceremony, don't judge or overanalyze how you performed the ceremony. Once you set your intention in the beginning, the helping spirits in the invisible realms work with you in partnership

to manifest that intention. Once you close your ceremony, reflect on the beauty of the work you have done. In indigenous cultures, people in the community always end by saying how beautiful a ceremony was.



When you engage in a ceremony that you perform regularly, you must stay diligent to strengthening the power of your work. You might go through steps habitually without dropping into a deep spiritual state. Your work can then lose meaning and passion. It is important to keep your work fresh. Use different ways to prepare. Change up your practice in some way so that you do not fall into a habitual routine. This is true for all of your practices. But you can easily fall into a repetitive routine with a ceremony you practice every month. You want to continue to dive deep instead of working on the surface.

THE HIDDEN REALMS

A shaman is a man or woman who shifts into an altered state of consciousness, a spiritual state of consciousness, to travel outside of time into the hidden realms that many people call non-ordinary reality. These hidden realms do exist, but we have closed the veils between the worlds and have forgotten other dimensions to life that we once knew as children. As children we had our invisible friends who provided comfort in our lives. Through our imagination and our daydreams, we would experience other worlds beyond what appeared to us in ordinary reality. Some of us would travel to the stars and communicate with the star beings. As children many of us communicated with fairies and animal spirits. The power of our imaginations gave us greater access to the spiritual realms.

The native people in Australia call non-ordinary reality the Dreamtime. In the Celtic traditions the term the Other World is used in speaking about the non-ordinary realms. I like to use the terms *the hidden worlds*, *the hidden realms*, and *the invisible realms* to reflect that

while these places are always present, many people no longer acknowledge their existence.

When one examines the cross-cultural stories of shamans, there are three common levels of worlds that are described. These worlds are also depicted through different forms of artwork that have been drawn on rocks and in caves around the world. The hidden worlds that the shamans travel to are known as the Underworld or Lower World, the Middle World, and the Upper World.

In both the Lower World and the Upper World, there are different levels that can be explored. The Middle World is the hidden realm of nature and the dimension we live in. In the course of this book you will be encouraged to perform shamanic journeys to the Middle World to work with nature spirits, the spirits of trees and plants, the Hidden Folk, the elements, the stars, and the moon; to access information from helping spirits in the past and future; and to even travel into parallel universes.

Abiding in these hidden realities there are helping spirits—compassionate spirits who offer their guidance. They also have the ability and capacity to heal issues that affect you on an emotional and physical level. As you will learn in part 2, your helping spirits might not perform a healing on you, but they might give you advice and show you the steps you need to take to make changes in your life that create healing. The helping spirits have great compassion for what's happening with individuals and on the planet. As you meet with your helping spirits over time, you will build a strong partnership with them.

Different helping spirits are consulted when any kind of information is needed. The helping spirits might appear as power animals and teachers in human form. There are also elemental spirits in earth, air, water, and fire that sustain life and have great wisdom and power to impart to us. Rocks and crystals are helping spirits, as are trees and plants. Many shamans work with plant spirits in order to heal a variety of ailments. There are also the Hidden Folk, who are caretakers of this great Earth and want to help us as we care for the Earth, too. Many of us call them *the fairy folk*, which includes the fairies, elves, and forest guardians. These too can appear as helping spirits for us.

ACCESSING THE HIDDEN REALMS

As people gain experience with journeying in the hidden realms, many practitioners realize that the non-ordinary realms are a hologram rather than linear worlds. You might become aware of the thinning of the veils between the ordinary and non-ordinary realms. As you learn to heighten your consciousness and open your third eye, or strong eye, as shamans do, you understand that you just have to lift a thin veil between the worlds to gain access to the hidden realms. There are many doorways to enter through.

Many people access the non-ordinary realms during their nighttime dreams. Incubating dreams was a practice in Ancient Egypt and Greece. In some native communities separate sleeping quarters were set up for dreamers who would incubate dreams for information for the community. In shamanic cultures the information received in dreams is taken very seriously. An individual might have a prophetic dream or might receive information that is important for all individuals in the community to hear.

Dreamtime is a time when you can meet up with a variety of helping spirits who might provide healing help or share with you guidance that will help you improve your life or work through a challenging issue. Before going to sleep at night, you can set your intention to ask for a dream that provides the guidance you might be needing in your life. The information you receive in your dreams assists you in your waking life.

It is common for people in indigenous communities to gather each morning to listen to each person's dreams. This is a time to reflect on the guidance shared during the night that might be important to hear for the health and well-being of not just one individual but for the community at large.

Nature itself offers a powerful doorway into the invisible realms. There are shamans who spend many hours in nature, without the use of the drum, where they meet with helping spirits, accessing great wisdom and receiving powerful visions. Years ago I had a very deep and powerful journey where I was shown that, in the beginning of time, people were taught how to heal by spending time with plants in