

A Box of Magick

A Guided Journey to Crafting a Magickal
Life Through Witchcraft,
Ritual Herbalism, and Spellcrafting

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Introduction

Snow was still on the ground in May when my mentor's life's work arrived on my doorstep. I felt the presence of my teacher, Connie DeMasters, Wiccan Elder High Priestess, even though she had crossed over to the Spirit World fifteen years earlier. The air tingled with the buzzing density of Magick as I stared at the twenty-three-pound cardboard box containing fifty years' worth of Witchcraft spells, rituals, hymns, plays, and teaching curricula. My beloved teacher was standing in front of me again, with her mischievous, cat-like eyes and pixie haircut, asking me to pass on the torch of her collected wisdom to you.

I had sat at Connie's knee for years discovering how to craft a magickal life, and I want to give you the same gift—a mentor to help you live the craft of the wise and deepen your ability to manifest, intuit, and connect with the language of our alive world and its limitless possibilities.

You are essential to keeping the legacy of Magick alive. Your perspective and insight deepen the practice of Witchcraft because it is an evolving spirituality that has survived by teachers sharing their knowledge and students adding theirs.

Patience in the Craft has always been a must.

Sifting through the fragile sheets of Connie's magickal curricula, I felt overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information to impart. I was deeply honored, even as my skin prickled with trepidation, when I read the note from Connie's daughter, Alexa: "I hope that you can do something with this stuff."

I waited a year for inspiration. I barely dared to touch the pages, afraid of dishonoring Connie's memory by putting her information together "wrong." Finally, I heard Connie say: "Tell them about us." Her infectious giggle rippled through my mind as a wave of grief and release passed through me. Tears fell down my cheeks. Conversations with Connie had taught me how to apply magickal lessons to everyday tasks, like cooking dinner or discerning

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the wisdom in the changing seasons. Her teachings and support led to the personal development that would help me realize my biggest dreams for success. Now I know how to give you, the reader, your very own box of Magick.

Within the pages of this book, there are twelve magickal lessons that correspond with the twelve steps that Joseph Campbell identified as the Hero's Journey, the pattern of personal discovery found in many myths and stories throughout the world. Stories of my meetings with Connie reinforce the teachings of *living* Magick. The spells and rituals give you the opportunity to practice paying attention to the seasonal, mystical, and ancestral wisdom that guides us in our everyday matters and inner life.

Throughout this book, Connie's curriculum will be shaded to indicate that you are indeed being taught by two priestesses. I recommend reading this book from beginning to end because the Magick intentionally builds upon itself and within ourselves. Over time, we all assign meaning to objects that are important to us.

A spell is a prayer in 3D.

My favorite, most visceral example of this is when Donna Reed, in the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, offers a housewarming blessing with bread so the family will never know hunger, salt so they will always know flavor, and wine so they will always know joy and prosperity.

We exist in a swirling, alive universe where all of nature is conscious of itself and is in constant communication with us. You cannot "unknow" Magick once you accept it into your heart and life, and you cannot unring the bell of self-knowledge once you discover how to manifest or deepen your bond with the vibration of magickal energy and the language of nature and the cosmos. Living a truly magickal life begins with seeing everything and every place as alive and calling out to you. Let's make Magick together!



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Magick is created by aligning your will with the conscious world and universal influences. All of nature, from the wind to the crystals on an altar to the herbs in a kitchen cabinet, is trying to help us experience great joy and satisfaction through continual conversation. The river reminds us to go with the flow, the redwood forest reminds us of our ever-present ability to stand up tall, and the horse symbolizes wild-hearted freedom. This is animism, the belief that there is a consciousness in everything alive, whether it's animals, plants, weather systems, human handiwork, and even words and stories.

This supernatural aid is always available because the law of attraction, the belief that you attract what you focus on, is a two-way street. Universal spirits, whether they're plant allies, animal guides, crystals, or archetypes, are constantly drawing us into their worldview so we may gain insight on how to craft a more fulfilling life. When we drop lavender essential oil into a diffuser to create a calm environment, the basic belief is that we are reaching out to the lavender and drawing its power into our world. But what if the inspiration for relaxation came from the spirit of the lavender pulling *us* into its state of calm? What if the leaves that floated down onto your path really are a message to let it go?

We grow and evolve through a give-and-take conversation with living creatures, elemental spirits, and even our beloved friends and family who have crossed to the other side. This open dialogue with the supernatural and natural worlds is the essence of Witchcraft.

I truly hope that you find it peaceful and empowering that the animated world is sending personalized messages and lending its assistance so you

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can be your best self. The Divine, Creative Source, Great Spirit, God, or Goddess is the font of life, love, and intelligence for every living thing, from the rose quartz to the lamb to the pine tree. Each time you feel love, you are experiencing the unique expression or interpretation of the Divine Source that is you. From there, consider that another expression of the Great Spirit, whether it's a tree, herb, crystal, or animal, has the intelligence and ability to communicate with you through a cosmic language of energy and vibration.

In a magickal life, the lavender and the feather call out to us as much as we call upon them. Yes, the law of attraction is real; we will attract whatever we focus on. However, it is important to take a moment here to reject feelings of guilt, shame, or blame for “attracting” bad things or living a life of oppressive social situations and status. Born with original innocence, we are eternal spirits who are becoming more aware of our power in human form. Within every life there is a blessing, however hidden. Allow curiosity and a sense of adventure to replace the feelings of “getting it wrong.”

We are more than this particular existence, yet this is where we can experience what it means to be viscerally alive, co-creating and communicating with an alive world. Diving into this conversation elevates our awareness and makes everywhere we step holy. This earth is where the Magick happens.

The poet Rumi said, “That which you seek is also seeking you.” Submerge yourself in self-care, lean into the world, and pay attention to the messages that are everywhere. Feeling connected leads to a sense of belonging and less stress. When we belong and feel supported, we can reach for our biggest dreams and self-actualization. We are given permission to create our happiness when we truly love ourselves as a member of a community that is interwoven. Magick teaches us how to connect with the multilayered awareness and consciousness of animals, plants, trees, mountains, water, and forests.

In accordance with the Principles of Wiccan Belief adopted at the Spring 1974 Witchmeet in Minneapolis, Minnesota, “We acknowledge that it is the affirmation and fulfillment of life, in a continuation of evolution and development of consciousness, that gives meaning to the universe we know, and to our personal role within it.”

Like intuition, mindfulness, or even a muscle, Magick grows with daily practice. For centuries, the Japanese have practiced *shinrin-yoku*, or forest bathing. Forest bathing is a simple act of being still and quiet in a forest of

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whatever size, perceiving nature through all of our senses. Listen to the birds singing and try to detect different sounds and feelings that support each trill. Look at the different leaves of the trees and the sunlight filtering through the branches. Allow nature to entice you with its fragrance and the natural aromatherapy of phytoncides, the volatile organic compounds (VOCs) or “essential oils” produced by trees that help them stave off bugs and boost our immune systems. Taste the dew in the air as you take deep breaths. Touch the trunks of trees, stems of leaves, and blades of grass. Lie on the ground and feel Mother Earth supporting you. Breathe with the trees and tap into the idea that you and the trees are breathing buddies. The living world is always calling us into its state of being, whether for healing, protection, love, or whatever else is needed at any given moment. Shinrin-yoku works as a bridge to close the gap between us and the natural world.

Our spirits also call out to each other, whether they are here on Earth or have crossed over. In Mexican families, such as mine, we create ofrendas for Día de los Muertos to keep the spirits of our beloved dead alive in our hearts. This is how we reach out to them. It is completely acknowledged that our beloved dead send signs to us, such as the scent of your grandmother’s favorite flowers wafting in the air after her passing. Many people have experienced hearing a love song just as they thought of their beloved, picking up on snatches of strangers’ conversations that seemed like they were meant just for them, or getting a phone call from their sibling just as they picked up the phone to call them. This is the Magick of Witchcraft, the art of listening and responding with intention.

In 2001, when I first met my mentor, Connie DeMasters, I had already published two Wiccan Witchcraft books and wanted to level up my magickal knowledge. Connie was in her fifties and was eager to share her wisdom with someone who could pass along her teachings and add their unique perspective and experience. After all, no Witch is like any other because the connection we each make between nature and ourselves is as unique as a fingerprint. As we practice our personalized version of the Craft, we walk a unique path toward becoming wise and knowledgeable in the areas we are attracted to or where we are most needed.

For three years, I sat at Connie’s knee, taking in her wisdom and teachings on Wicca, lightwork (the meditative focus on positivity, love, and faith, regardless of spirituality or religion), and conscious personal development

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from one-on-one magickal instruction. She taught me in the tradition of the Druidic Craft of the Wise of America (DCWA). I would then apply the teachings in my life and make connections between Witchcraft and earth sciences, esoterica, mindfulness, and even my Christian Science upbringing. She gave me the scaffolding upon which to grow my spiritual practice.

Fifteen years after Connie's passing, when her daughter asked if she could send me all of her mother's magickal lessons, I accepted the responsibility and honor of creating something wonderful with her mother's collection. It was the onset of the 2020 pandemic, and I needed strong arms around me as I faced isolation in menopause. It had been a long time since I'd felt the support of an elder. When we're encouraged to embody the fullness of our Divine expression, our greatest potential and Magick often alight on our fingertips. Receiving Connie's treasure trove of Magick with her family's blessing confirmed that I was still on the right track. A mentor can often reflect back to you the inner wisdom you didn't realize you had. This reflection can even come from beyond the veil.

I remember the first day Connie and I spoke like it was yesterday.



"The Spirits tell me that I am supposed to teach you," Connie said during our introductory phone call.

I stared at the phone in disbelief. I wondered if this was a joke, but my intuition told me that Connie was the answer for my recent spell for a new Witchcraft mentor. I felt a chill race through my body. In my mind's eye, I saw Connie, a full-figured woman of fifty-plus years, sitting at the Eye of the Cat booth at the 2001 Long Beach WomanSpirit Winter Solstice Faire. She had a glint in her eyes, Santa Claus peepers that crinkled in merriment as she watched the parades of pagans, Witches, and bohos dressed in velvet capes, jangling bracelets, and flowy goddess garb. Connie regarded the revelers as if each person was her own precious grandchild. She simply emanated pride and love.

Even though I was in a neighboring booth twenty feet away, I had a feeling that Connie was listening to me converse with people who bought signed copies of *The Wicca Cookbook* and *The Teen Spell Book*. I could feel her sending waves of support when festivalgoers paused uncertainly in front of my books and, within minutes, pulled out their credit cards or cash.

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Two days after the fair, I stood in my son's bedroom with the phone in my hand, goosebumps rising across the backs of my arms. I could feel that Magick was afoot. From nowhere and everywhere, I sensed the aroma of temple incense and heard the tinkling of bells. I felt that destiny had drawn us both toward that moment, an exciting new mentor-mentee relationship.

As if she were reading my thoughts, Connie tittered like a bubbly school-girl. "Shall we meet at my house?" she asked.

I answered immediately. "What can I bring?"

It was time to own my power.

A few days later, I secured a babysitter for my toddler sons, picked up two caramel macchiatos and maple nut scones from Starbucks, and drove to Connie's eclectic neighborhood in Long Beach. Artful and not-so-artful graffiti on buildings and walls made me feel far too suburban as the discomfort from that raw depiction of life washed over me. At the same time, I felt exhilarated to be breaking free from the blandly familiar and meeting a new teacher.

I knocked on the screen door, and Connie called for me to enter. She had set a chair across from where she sat in a black leather recliner. On the wall behind her was a framed picture of a grey wolf in the woods. I scanned her bookshelf, which was crammed with mojo bags, crystals, statues of various gods and goddesses, a series of lit, colored advent candles, and many dusty books. We sipped our coffee and smiled at each other. I had the sensation that Connie was drinking in everything about me, from my eyes to my clothes and jewelry to my posture. It was as if she had been waiting for this day for a long time.

She lit a white taper candle and said, "I'm glad you're here." The flame rose as if it were stretching, licking the air, and testing the room's vibration. When the light settled, Connie smiled at the candle, then looked at me. "I realize it took trust to come today, and I admire you for that. Why did you decide to come?"

When did you answer the calling to your wildness? When did you decide to trust your inner knowing above all else? When did you hear the first whisperings of your most untamed nature?

REWILDING THROUGH MAGICK

When I met my mentor, I was on the other side of my Saturn's Return at thirty-three years old, the master year. Saturn, the planet of discipline, has a long orbit. Around the time when you turn twenty-seven, it returns to the position in the sky it was in when you were born. For approximately five years, this strict disciplinarian sits on you, taking away all that you relied upon for your identity and security. You melt like a caterpillar, and when you restructure, you are reborn as a butterfly with a stronger sense of self and knowledge of how to fly.

However, this "adulthood" can cause us to disconnect from our wild side. Mistakes feel huge and irreparable when really they are Spirit Holes, metaphysical openings for life's greatest lessons to enter. I was in one of those Spirit Holes and beginning to lose my grip on my faith in the natural world that once had called me into its harmonized existence. Whether through the wind, birdsong, or sunshine, nature had usually filled me with the best feeling in the world. But now I felt like I had been deprived of my connection to the earth, this sentient world that I knew was so eager to share its ancestral knowledge. Motherhood, a sad marriage, and a mortgage were making it difficult for me to find my feral spirit. At the same time, I resisted being pulled into domesticity with every fiber of my passionate spirit.

Some people come into this world with an innate and inexplicable relationship with nature, and others have to cultivate it. Sometimes we get disconnected and strive to embolden the truest parts of ourselves and reunite with our inner essence. Some people grow up surrounded by unspoiled land and have childhood memories of nature's language, whether in the West Virginia woods where they built a fort that no one but them and Mother Earth knew about or near the quiet and stillness of mountain lakes. Others replenish their energy, also known as *chi* or *qi*, the vital force of all living entities, from the desert moon on sagebrush to the peaks so high they feel on top of the world to the blue oceans so vast the horizon becomes a friend. And some hear the animals speak. They know the cat's keen, strategic nature, the dog's greatest joy in being silly, and the horse's ability to heal with its eyes.

Witchcraft is essentially an earth spirituality in which we see ourselves as belonging to the Elements: air as breath, water as blood, fire as energy, and earth as body. Nature offers peace, harmony, and protection that can

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be experienced and felt by human beings, as we are part of nature. Our job is to conjure a childlike wonder and listen to the consciousness of the earth, trust our intuition, and allow ourselves to be inspired. We were all born pure, regardless of how we were treated as children or adults. Sometimes it's very difficult to see our original innocence, and we may need help from a professional. We may need to remove obstacles that prevent us from seeing or remembering our imaginative curiosity and boundless hope.

Teacher, artist, occultist, social reformer, and clairvoyant Rudolf Steiner expanded the concept of human potential by stating that humans are linked to the cosmos and nature for self-development and individuality as well as for societal evolution. His pedagogy holds that children are deeply connected to both the natural and spirit worlds, so it follows that surrounding the young child with natural materials is the best way to inspire their creativity, imagination, and free play. My children attended a Waldorf school, where their playthings were made solely of natural materials. I watched as they interacted with the spirit in their wooden block that was once a tree, the silkworm that wove the thread for their hero's cape, and the hum of the bees that created the wax for their crayons. Children, Steiner believed, know how to speak with seemingly inanimate objects by connecting to them in their alive forms.

This symbiotic relationship isn't only experienced by children, however. It's also experienced by those who are willing to suspend their disbelief long enough to make room for miracles. In the 1960s in northern Scotland, a family built a legendary garden from once barren soil by listening to specific requests of the deva, or conscious spirit, of the plants. The family gave the land what it needed, including their friendship. Word spread about forty-pound cabbages and ten-foot-tall foxgloves. Horticulture experts arrived and could determine no other factor for the creation of the huge garden beyond the attention and respect given to the spirits of the plants. Now known as the Findhorn Foundation, this eco-village and retreat center rests on three guiding principles for its work in the world: inner listening, work as love in action, and co-creation with the intelligence of nature.

Now more than ever, socio-ecology, the study of the relationship between organisms, animals, and plants with their environments, is at the front of our minds as we feel the impact of climate change. Aldo Leopold, considered the father of socio-ecology, advocated for a land ethic: care for people cannot