

# Tending to the Sacred

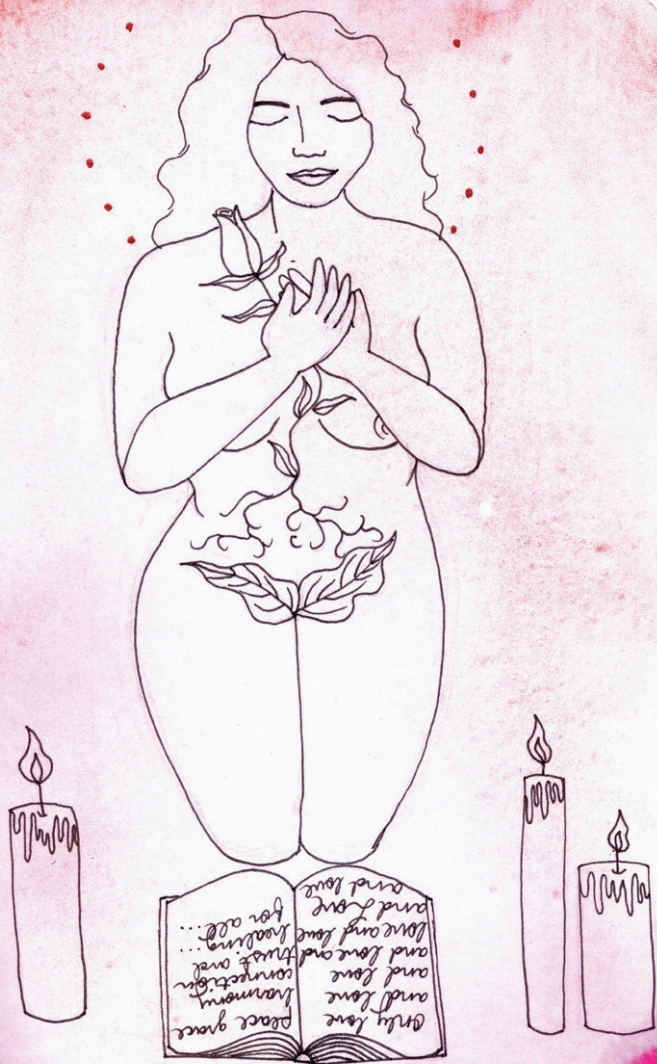
**Rituals to Connect with  
Earth, Spirit, and Self**

By Ashley River Brant

# Contents

<b>Preface</b>	ix
<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Section 1: Groundwork</b>	8-9
<b>Chapter 1:</b> The Four Pillars	11
<b>Chapter 2:</b> Understanding Energy	39
<b>Chapter 3:</b> Grounding	59
<b>Section 2: Tending to the Earth</b>	72-73
<b>Chapter 4:</b> The Elements	75
<b>Chapter 5:</b> Earth	83
<b>Chapter 6:</b> Air	93
<b>Chapter 7:</b> Fire	101
<b>Chapter 8:</b> Water	109
<b>Chapter 9:</b> Reciprocity	119
<b>Section 3: Tending to the Self</b>	128-129
<b>Chapter 10:</b> Our Mission, Our Healing	131
<b>Chapter 11:</b> Self-Healing	137
<b>Chapter 12:</b> Self-Love	151
<b>Chapter 13:</b> Self-Protection	159
<b>Chapter 14:</b> Self-Expression	169
<b>Chapter 15:</b> Self-Care	189

<b>Section 4: Tending to the Sacred</b>	198-199
<b>Chapter 16: The Sacred</b>	201
<b>Chapter 17: Connecting to Our Sacred Guidance</b>	209
<b>Chapter 18: Returning to Love</b>	231
<b>Chapter 19: Integration</b>	247
<b>Chapter 20: Gratitude</b>	259
<b>Chapter 21: From Death Comes Life</b>	265
 <b>About the Author</b>	 273



## Chapter One

# The Four Pillars

Ritual work is our groundwork. It offers us a way to bring the spiritual into the physical and ground our souls into our bodies on this Earth. The four pillars that are the foundation of ritual work are intention, space, love, and belief. These pillars are essential ingredients in creating your ritual practice. Without intention, your energy and ritual would lack focus. Without space, they would have no room to move. Without love, your energy and ritual would remain lifeless and easily dissolve. Without belief, you would have trouble connecting to what you are creating. When we gather these pillars together, magic happens—our rituals come to life, energy transforms, healing takes place, and the Sacred responds.

## Intention

Routine instantly turns into ritual with a single intention. Intentions set the tone of our ritual practices. They guide the energy of the moment and the type of energy we create. Intention fosters intimacy with Spirit and enhanced awareness and meaning in our lives. Without intention, our rituals may feel lifeless, mindless, ineffective, or disconnected. But it is through our dialog (with ourselves, with the Earth, and with Spirit) that intention is formed and energy is directed toward our ritual. Where we place our intention and attention is always where we place our energy.

It's important to know that every word that falls from your mouth is a spell unfolding. Words are powerful, and language is a universal gift that assists us in creating. The magic incantation *abracadabra* is from the Hebrew phrase *avra keh-dabra* which translates as "I will create as I speak." However, intention doesn't always have to be spoken out loud to be powerful. Your intention can be said in your mind, written down, or simply visualized or felt. If your intention is to embody love, you can say so, or you can simply visualize or feel into the energy of love. That could look like picturing someone you love most in this life, visualizing a pink glowing heart floating around you or from within, or bringing your attention to your body and feeling the energy of love in your heart space. When practicing ritual, always take time to find clarity on your intention and feel into what arises. Your intention can be anything you wish to attract, feel, release, create, or embody within. When creating your intention, simply ask yourself the following questions:



*How do I want to feel? What do I want to create in this moment? Why am I connecting to this ritual?*

You can bring intentionality into everything you do in order to create more ritual, magic, and purpose into your day-to-day life. The purpose of intention is to cultivate meaning in the mundane. This creates a relationship between action, feeling, purpose, and presence. From this relationship, our life grows in meaning. Practice reflecting on how you can create more intention throughout all of life's little moments to bring meaning to the forefront of your life. Here are some examples of simple daily practice rituals:

- ◇ When making coffee or tea in the morning, simply place your hands around your mug and whisper to yourself, "May this bring me vital energy and clarity to navigate my day."
- ◇ When washing the dishes, set the intention to clear the energy of the day from your hands (which are an extension of your heart), thus having the ability to clear any emotional tension you are carrying.
- ◇ Set intentions of vitality and nourishment as you make your meals. Try thinking about how you want to feel when you add each ingredient and what medicine it will bring to you. All food is medicine.
- ◇ Speak to others with the intention to share and connect, and listen with the intention to learn and receive from a nonjudgmental state.

## Space

A big part of coming home to ourselves is creating space for our healing. We must honor the sacred space and time we create for our ritual practices. What you create space for in your life takes up space in your life. Tending to the Sacred not only requires space, it deserves space. You deserve space. Space empowers presence. If you have a full day in front of you, begin this work by scheduling just five to ten minutes of ritual time in a way that creates the most ease. Maybe that means waking up five minutes earlier or cutting down on your phone and computer time for the day. If you have time for media, you have time for ritual. Do what works for you and your life, but prioritize your connection and re-centering—not as a daily chore, but as an essential for your balance and well-being.

What takes up space around you in your life also takes up internal space, so this is something to consider when beginning a ritual practice. Everything in your life—friends, the color of your bedroom walls, the food you eat, and your environment—has the ability to change your energy and affect your internal energetic space (emotions, mental energy, health/vitality) and auric field (your spirit body—the subtle energy extending within and around your physical body). As you connect more to your ritual practice, you will slowly begin to notice how everything affects your energy and become aware of what takes up space in your life (in both positive and negative ways). This is important to take note of along your journey, for if something takes up a lot of space in your life and doesn't feel aligned or make you feel happy, it will block new energies connected to your intentions from entering your life.



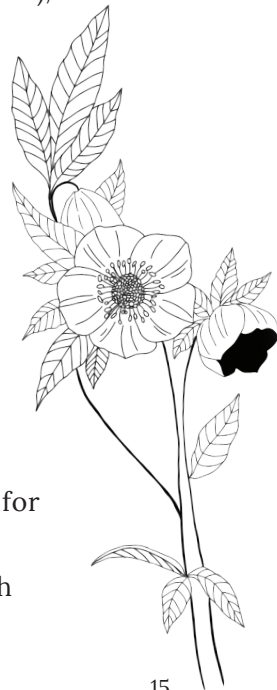
You may want to carry a journal around with you and just begin to notice what happens when you hang out with a certain person, when you complete a particular task, when you spend an extra twenty minutes in ritual, do something you love, do something different, or let go of control for the day and wander around just following your intuition. Notice what things cause anxiety, fatigue, and fear, and what things light you up, inspire you, make you feel centered, and fill you with joy. All of these energies take up valuable space. The former are contractive energies and the latter are expansive. When we can be more conscious of the energy we invite into our sacred energetic spaces, we can move toward greater alignment on our paths.

We clear and create more space by letting go of the things that take up too much space. This can be an internal energy (such as an old emotion that we are holding onto or a past wounding), a physical energy (a person, object, job, or place that is weighing us down), an unseen energy (such as a belief), or an energy you may have absorbed from a person, place, or event.

Ritual is a powerful tool for clearing space. Clearing space can assist in attracting what we are seeking to connect with in our ritual. Wafting the smoke of a dried plant ally, putting on soothing sounds, and connecting with your breath are all powerful rituals in themselves you can connect to in just a few minutes to create more space in your day.

Here are some tools to help you clear space:

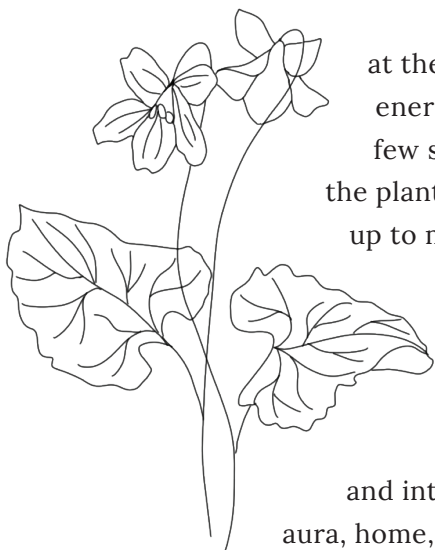
- ◇ **Plants.** Plants have been used to create space for millennia upon millennia. One of my favorite rituals is to sit with my beloved rosemary bush











at the entry to my house and ask for her energy to clear my own. I like to clip off a few sprigs and brush my entire body with the plant, starting from the soles of my feet up to my head, as I breathe deeply with the intention to clear out any energies I am holding that need to be released. Another way I like to create space is to burn a tiny bit of bark from my favorite trees—cedar or cypress—and intentionally waft the smoke around my aura, home, and sacred spaces with my hand or a found feather. All plants have medicine and power-

ful energy to offer us. We see the use of herbs such as white sage and palo santo trending in modern times and even sold in corporate stores, and both are said to clear out negative energy. While yes, these are beautiful energy clearers to create space, this type of usage is the opposite of sacred Earth tending (more on this in the next chapter) and these beautiful allies are now on the bridge to extinction. These plants have been used with sacred purpose by their indigenous land tenders for centuries. It is of utmost importance to obtain our herbal allies in sustainable and conscious ways, and work with herbal allies we have formed a connection with from the heart. If that connection isn't there, we cannot energetically receive its loving medicine. Notice the plants that surround you where you are, and which ones you feel a strong pull toward. Those are your medicine. Cedar and

rosemary are two close allies of mine, but they may not offer you the same healing as they do for me. These simple space clearing rituals can be done with any plant—from the dandelion that grows up from the sidewalk to the pine needles that fall in your neighborhood. Simply create space to commune, connect to the energy of the plant, and set your intention.

- ◇ **Saltwater.** Salt is also a powerful energy clearer, which is why bathing in salt water, whether in the bath or the ocean, can shift and clear out whatever energies we intend it to. I take a salt bath almost daily to clear out the energy from the day and to create space for my emotional and intuitive energy to flow with more ease. I also keep a shell filled with sea salt or pink salt in all my sacred places to act as an energy clearer for my space so that the energetic waters of my life may flow more freely.
- ◇ **Breath.** Dropping into your body and connecting to intentional breathing is a beautiful, simple way to clear out any stuck energy. Breath is life force energy—a healing tool at the root of most all ancient healing practices. Taking even three deep breaths when feeling overwhelmed or off-balanced can connect us back to our sacred center.
- ◇ **Movement.** Moving my body is my go-to ritual practice to transform and express stuck energy and create more space in my body for its natural wisdom and grounded presence. My movement practice is intuitive dancing



(sometimes slow and curving with tears streaming down my face, sometimes more passionately to Beyoncé), but whatever feels best and most natural and intuitive for your body will be a healing ally in your journey. Whenever you feel anxiety, tension, fear, or stagnant emotion in your body—aches and pains around the back of your heart, chest, hips, and shoulders/neck (the areas where we tend to hold the most tension)—connect to your body and move it in whatever way feels best.

- ◇ **Sound.** Sound is the most powerful energy clearer. For me, singing clears out any energy that I am holding onto in my heart and throat. Singing knocks down the walls around my love and opens my heart to grace, and allows me to more easily express myself. I also use musical instruments in my self-tending and client practice to clear energy: a small lyre harp my partner made for me, a flute, drums, rattles, shakers, and singing bowls. I look to sound and music as my ally to open my heart and channels, clear unwanted energies in my auric field, and fortify my boundary of sacred love. You may find that certain music shifts your energy or that having a wind chime outside your front door clears energy in your space. You may find healing in chanting, mantras, humming, or birdsong. Listen and connect to the sounds that create the most space for you.
- ◇ **Removing distractions.** Distractions can manifest as negative habits, other people's opinions, devices, social media, etc. Distractions carry energy that is not our own and can

