

The Value of Ceremony

All of us, at some point or another in our lives, have taken part in ceremony, whether it was a marriage ceremony, a church service, or funeral. Some of our western ceremonies can provoke strong emotions and some are merely empty rituals. Some, like the rite of passage into adulthood, have been lost altogether. What we may no longer remember is that ceremony, particularly ceremonies that we create ourselves, can be a powerful way of focusing intention, moving us in a desired direction, and honoring where we've been.

Ceremony for Transitions

As we move through our lives, each of us is moving forward in our spiritual evolution. You are not the same person you were 10 years ago. You have evolved and changed. If you've been around a good many years then you could probably say that you've had several "chapters" in this life, periods that were vastly different from each other, often marked by tumultuous change. Knowing and using ceremony during and after these transitions can close the old way with honor and gratitude, and can open the new way with solid intention. Ceremony focuses and grounds our intention like nothing else can.

Ceremony for Gratitude and Spiritual Growth

But ceremony is not only for the major transitions in life. It can also be used as a truly potent practice towards enlightenment. A daily gratitude ceremony, for example, is a potent way of moving your awareness towards the truth of who you are. Gratitude holds a high vibration. Cultivating it, either through meditation or yoga or any other practice is a wonderful way to move towards recognizing the divine within you. A gratitude ceremony truly grounds and manifests that cultivated gratitude as you speak and move in congruence with the internal feeling. It is a potent practice.

There is another, rather surprising reason to engage in such a practice--you'll be able to identify and then work on the negative, shadowy elements of ego that need healing. How does this work? Well, if you listen carefully to the internal voices (thoughts of the mind) without censorship, you'll hear the parts of you that are still attached to some piece of ego. Make a mental note about what comes up and you can follow that negative comment to a part that needs healing, then begin to address it. In your ceremony, for example, you might be saying, "I'm so grateful for my husband, who loves me without reserve," and your mind fires back, "What are you talking about? That jerk has been taking advantage of us for YEARS!" (That's probably nicer language than you'd hear.) Normally we squelch these voices, but they can be wonderful leads for healing.

Ceremony for the Earth Mother

Aside from using ceremony to honor our own transitions or move us farther in our path, ceremony can be a part of honoring the Earth Mother, as it has been for millennia. The Vernal Equinox, Summer Solstice, Autumnal Equinox, and Winter Solstice mark the changing of the Earth's daylight and seasons. These shifts can be honored and we can remember the continual gifts our Mother gives us on these days. Here again, there is gratitude, but there is also a deepening of our ties to the Earth Mother on these days as well.

These are not the only reasons that ceremony can be of value, of course. It can be used for almost any purpose. It is a powerful practice that focuses and grounds intention, no matter what that intention may be.