

SACRED TIME AND SPACE

Rituals are performed at the times designated as appropriate to the intention of the ritual. Usually they are performed in regular cycles(at Sunrise or Sunset) or in accordance with important events (birth and death).

Sacred times are identified by an exhibition of special behavior in most cultures. As Americans we stand at attention, kneel with hands folded, sit in silence, or step in time to the music to signify special events. Sound and silence in right combination mark the times we find to be, or decide to make sacred. This is true among all people.

Life in the urban jungle requires that we move at a fast pace through noisy polluted space. . We must communicate with people around the globe , transport ourselves from place to place and complete projects at a rate unheard of before in human history. In order to do this we over- employ our left brain, attempt to be super- rational, and we suppress bodily sensations and deny emotions. This lifestyle fragments our consciousness by separating us from Nature and our own natures . Our technology allows us to place ourselves above Nature rather than in Nature. So naturally we feel unnatural . We can reintegrate our consciousness by slowing down, setting our mundane tasks aside and going into sacred *a rational* time. These changes are required in order to create ritual time. How do we recognize the right time for ritual?

There are many important moments in an average day in this world. As you sit here reading this text a new born baby cries, and someone else sits besides the corpse of a loved one. . Both these changes are of equal importance , because they mark a complete cycle of time in human life. Within that cycle

there are sacred times, times of change which humans feel should be acknowledged in some way. The importance of the time varies according to the lifestyle and needs of the individual and the culture.

The farmer finds Sunrise, the beginning of her day ,blessed. The Earth favors the work she is committed to doing. For the construction worker however, Sunset may be most sacred as he returns home from labor under a blazing Sun on the hot asphalt. The rise of the Moon and Her phases of Full, Dark and New Crescent are important to the night crew, the owl and the entertainer, and of course the seasons of the Earth, Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter all have their celebrations.

Each individual and community recognizes these sacred times and celebrates them according to a belief system and history of that group, that landscape. While most people celebrate the harvest in some form or another, some pay homage to the *idea* of the land while others address the land itself. For example. America celebrates the harvest by stocking the supermarkets with food and holding elaborate dinners. This is a different statement from the actions of cultures where an offering is made to the Spirit of the Earth.

your life that you have experienced as sacred.

The Making of A Day

Each quarter of the day carries with it a feeling and evokes a response. The suggestions below are offered to help you make your day sacred....everyday.

1. SUNRISE

The time of new beginnings. Sunlight purifies any negative emotions (fear and depression) which may have occurred in nightmares or difficult dreams. For a fresh start in daily life face the East, the rising Sun and give thanks for a new day.

2. HIGH NOON

A time of illumination. This is a time of clarity and honesty. High noon is good for seeing things as they really are rather than as we want them to be. High noon is a time of intensity and is associated with strength and exertion. Look around you, notice the growth of plants, animals, and children.

3. SUNSET

A romantic time, and a time of completion. This is a good time to contemplate the natural progression of life, of things accomplished. Sit back, facing West, the setting Sun, and give thanks for work completed.

4. MOONRISE

Time to rest and reflect. At moonrise we think of the elders, the natural progression toward death and the return to the womb of the earth and the spirit world. Moonrise can be soothing and peaceful. Lie down and read a book, listen to soft music or watch the stars.

You will find full descriptions of rituals celebrating the natural cycles in the next chapter.

Sacred Sounds

Sacred times are usually accentuated by specific sounds. I recommend that you incorporate sacred sounds in the design of your rituals. Body sounds such as hand-clapping, finger-popping and ululation may be used. There's also a wide variety of instruments available in our global community a few suggestions are listed as follows:

1. DRUMS

Drums are the heartbeat, the basic rhythm of life. They are used to call the community together and to excite the senses.

2. BELL

The sound of the bell is a call to action, a signal to change focus or direction. Crystal bowl and metal bells may be used to alter the vibrational field. Wind chimes give audible sound to invisible presence.

3. RATTLE

Rattles are most often used as instruments of prayer. You may want to pass the rattle as each person speaks or prays. Rattles may accent the beginning or end of a song. The can be played to sound like the hissing of a snake or the roar of the ocean.

4. STRINGS

String instruments can be very soothing. Sometimes they are played during a meditation, to imitate the sound of water, or to establish an atmosphere of romance. Strings are often regarded as "feminine instruments."

5. HORNS

The blowing of horns is regarded as a "masculine activity". Horns are associated with aggressive action such as herding animals, hunting, and

Sacred Places

Places in Nature such as a Riverbank or Mountain top may provide the natural beauty required to empower the ritual. Often temporary shrines or permanent buildings may be constructed specifically as a place for ritual. Or acts of purification (smudging, sprinkling) and enhancement (decoration , altar building) are employed to create an atmosphere conducive to the intention of the ritual.

The answers to these questions will help you to begin to feel out your “ritual style”. I am always deeply touched by the opportunity to perform rituals near a river or stream. This is true because I was born by the Mississippi River at New Orleans and have always managed to live near large bodies of water. Someone else may feel more powerful in the desert or on a rocky mountain top. The point is to find the place in nature that is most empowering to you and the ritual you are performing. We will discuss the art of building altars and creating ritual rooms later in this chapter..

Shape-Shifting Moon

As the Moon waxes and wanes during the course of the month, Her changing size and shape reminds us that She is the original shape-shifter. Over the centuries our ancestors experienced a range of emotions in relationship to the Moon and they acknowledged these with a variety of rituals and celebrations.

The recommendations and examples below are designed to introduce you to lunar ecstasy.

1. NEW MOON

Time to begin, to invoke, to attract. Catch the light of the New Crescent Moon in a dram of your favorite oil or perfume. Place the container of perfume/oil in the garden where young plants are growing. Appeal to the Moon for creative inspiration, good beginnings, and invigorating relationships. Cover the container during the day. At First Quarter Moon use this perfume/oil to attract lovers and friends and to start creative endeavors.

2. FULL MOON

Time to complete, to dispel. Place a gallon of Ocean water (or Spring water lightly salted) in a pan at Moonrise. Catch the reflection of the Full Moon (one night per pan) in the water. Use this water in cleansing rituals, especially post-partum baths and menopause rituals

3. DARK MOON

Time to be cautious, contemplative. Write your secrets on a piece of brown paper bag. Fold the paper and put it in a dark colored bottle. Cap tightly. Bury the bottle during the dark of the Moon.

4. BLUE MOON

A time to release sorrows. Cry into a bowl of water colored blue. Light a blue candle or take a blue bath. (Note: For an excellent Blue Moon ritual please read *Celestially Auspicious Occasions: Seasons, Cycles, and Celebrations* by Donna Henes pg 193-196)
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