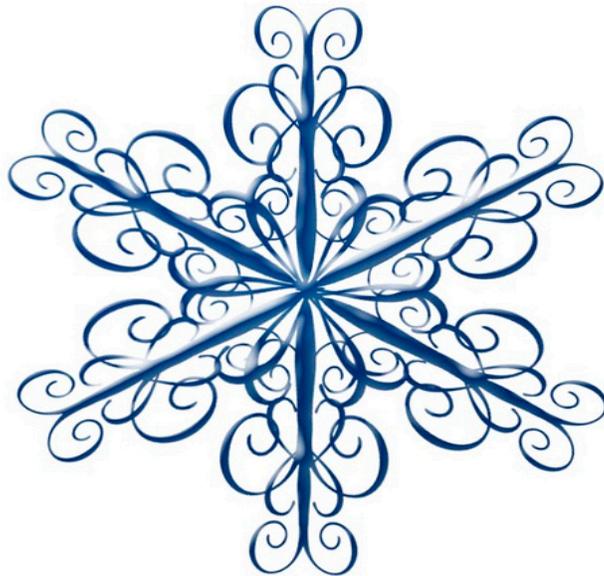


WALKING THE SACRED WHEEL A Year's Journey of Initiation

INTRODUCTORY LESSON WEEK 3



**Sacred Wisdom Circle Institute
Salt Lake City, Utah**

Invocation Blessing Song

Behold Great Mystery, Creative Force, Spirit That Moves Through All! We call to the Seven Directions of the Sacred Wheel!

We turn to the Keepers of the East, direction of new beginnings, of inspirations, of illumination and creativity, of the dawn and spring, new births, and childhood. Be with us, teach us, show us your ways!

We call to the Keepers of the South, direction of vitality, of high noon and hot sun, of summer and vigorous growth, of youth and passion. Be with us, teach us, show us your ways!

We invite the Keepers of the West, direction of introspection, of the evening, of autumn and maturity, deepening and ripening. Be with us, teach us, show us your ways!

We respectfully summon the Keepers of the North, direction of the night, of winter, of wisdom and transformation, of dropping inessentials to reveal the core. Be with us, teach us, show us your ways!

We look up to the sky and call to the Beings of the sun, the moon, the clouds, the stars, and the endless blue, and we ask that you bring your spaciousness and mystery to this work. Be with us, teach us, show us your ways!

We put our hands on the ground and ask that the great substance of the Earth give grounding to the work, and that the Earth's beauties give us beauty and that the entire world—the animals and plants and rocks, mountains and rivers and seas, the elemental forces of Earth and Air and Fire and Water, and all the human beings, all the elders, children, teachers, all the red, yellow, black, and white—join in this blessing. Be with us, teach us, show us your ways!

We call to the Sweet Mystery that is the Sacred Center, to hold us and cradle us in your divine protection. Be with us, teach us, show us your ways!

We claim this work to serve, to bless, and to share knowledge for wisdom building and for bringing wholeness to our hearts and to our world. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

(Note: The beginning prayer and a final blessing appear at the beginning and end of each lesson, respectively. These prayers mark the cycle of energy within that lesson and create a circle of connection.)

CENTERING AND GROUNDING

The art of centering is crucial to Wheel work and other ceremonial work. The more centered you are, the more powerful and safe your work will be. Centering techniques help to bring your energy together to allow you to let go of the mundane, everyday reality and thus enter the realm of the sacred. This is another form of the process of intentionality and another form of the Give-away. By giving devoted attention to the sacred, you are honoring the good of all.

When centering, you draw your attention from all the issues and concerns of your everyday world and concentrate with clarity of purpose on the Divine. The easiest way to do this is through the breath. If you are in a group of people, you can center by holding hands and breathing together. When centering this way, the energy flows better if people place their left hand palm up (to receive energy) and their right hand palm down (to give energy). Breathe rhythmically and concentrate on the flow and power of life that circulates through the group to center yourself even deeper.

Centering through sound is very powerful. This is sometimes called sonic driving, which is an important tool often used in shamanic Journeying. Chanting, drumming, rattling, and playing droning instruments such as didgeridoos all work well for centering. When drumming, beat the rhythm of your own heartbeat. You can also rattle your heartbeat. Chanting is especially powerful in that you take the energy of the Earth in through your body, magnify the energy with your intention, and then send the energy out with your voice as a Give-away. The quality of your singing voice does not matter if you think you cannot sing. The purpose of chanting is centering and sending energy.

It is important for you to differentiate between centering and grounding. Centering is the way you draw your energy *away* from the everyday world to do spiritual work, and grounding is the way that you *return* to normal consciousness. Being grounded means that you are aware of your body and you know how you feel while you are carrying out ordinary affairs of the day. The secret to being grounded is to become aware of the web of energy that manifests through the sun, moon, stars, the air, the rain, the plants, and so on. To be grounded and to stay grounded is easiest when outdoors because the connection between the Spirit body and the physical body tends to be stronger there. The simple act of moving into relationship with the natural elements is the key.

There are many grounding methods, and it is worthwhile to identify the ones that work best for you. Some are very simple, such as breathing evenly and listening to your breath. Gentle humor, journaling, or bringing your mind to your to-do list will also work. You can track sensations in your body or walk barefoot or lie on the ground. Other methods include getting on your hands and knees and placing your forehead on the earth; drinking water or eating food, especially protein (it is best to avoid sugar); toning *Hu-uu-uu-uu*; holding a stone in your hand; picking up a handful of dirt and smelling it; or simply stepping outside and deeply drinking in the freshness of the air. All of these methods work.

Study Guide: Centering and Grounding

Exercise 8: Centering

Draw your breath in through your nose, and release it through your mouth, letting it go through as much of your body as possible. Take long, slow, deep breaths. Pay attention as you breathe, and feel your breath connecting you with the Earth as you breathe in and the Sky as you breathe out. This form of centering is greatly enhanced if practiced outdoors. As you concentrate on your breathing, feel the Earth under your feet and the breeze upon your skin. Hear the sounds of Nature, and take them in. Relax your body as much as you can, paying particular attention to your shoulders, jaw, and stomach muscles.

Exercise 9: Grounding

The exercise below is a grounding exercise that also helps strengthen your physical body if practiced often. Make a point to do this throughout the day anytime your energy feels scattered or distracted and you are not accomplishing the daily task that need to be done. When you are stressed this is the way to get re-grounded.

1. Relax, close your eyes, and breathe deeply for at least 20 or 30 breaths.
2. Become fully aware of your physical body, and then shift your awareness to the Earth directly below you. Even if you are in a high-rise building, you can stretch your awareness down through the floors and concrete until you reach the ground.
3. Spend a few seconds there, feeling gratitude for the support that the Earth gives us. Then continue stretching your awareness downward and through the layers of dirt and rock until you come to the molten inner core of the Earth. Acknowledge each layer that you pass through, and remember that the Earth Mother is alive and that she is responsive to your attention. The Earth Spirit delights in being recognized and wants to return the gift by being of service to you.
4. Now, send a beam of connection from the base of your spine to the core of the Earth and anchor the beam of light solidly there. The connection can be column of light, a rod of spiritual energy, or some other kind of “cord” that connects you. Let your physical body be firmly connected, as if you have a long tail that stretches all the way to the core of the Earth and wraps firmly around it.
5. Use this connection to drain out all excess tensions that you are carrying so this energy can be transmuted by the intense heat of the core. After that is complete, let the energy from the Earth rise up into your body, making you more solid and present. If you have trouble making the connection, ask for assistance and wait for a helper or guardian. You may be surprised and delighted at who shows up. Then go about your day with the strength of your connections intact.

Exercise 10: Make Sure You're Connected

1. Do this sitting up with the lights on. Do not lie down, and do not play music during this exercise.
2. Sit and breathe in full, easy breaths; land in your body.
3. Get behind your eyes, between your ears, and in the center of your head.
4. Create a cord of golden white light; let the light go through the top of your head, through your body, and down, down, down, down, a *long* way down, to the center of the Earth, and then connect the cord to the core of the Earth.
5. Imagine your feet under the crust of the Earth.
6. Draw golden earth energy up through your legs and up into your torso, over the top of your head, then down your spine back into the earth. Keep checking to make sure you are behind your eyes, between your ears, and in the center of your head.
7. Allow some of the energy to flow up into your torso, out of your arms, and out the top of your head.
8. As the energy flows out of the top of your head, say “Hello” to your auric field. Find the edges of your aura, and have the energy flow to those edges and then back down to the center of the earth. This heals the aura, filling in those places where life has torn gaps.
9. Imagine the Sun just above your head; the Sun has your name on written in beautiful colored letters.
10. Let go of any old energy, releasing the energy down through your grounding cord; let the Earth create a new grounding cord for you. Keep checking to make sure you are behind your eyes, between your ears, and in the center of your head.
11. Let the Sun pour its energy into the letters of your name, and watch the letters merge into your being; at the same time, let the Earth energy rise, grounding each letter into your being. Allow the energies to mix and flow up your body and out the crown of your head.
12. Put anything you would like to manifest into the Sun, and fill yourself and your aura with this Sun energy. This will plant the seed of whatever you want or need in your auric field; this is the beginning of manifestation.
13. Slowly open your eyes, and notice how grounded and still you are, ready to face the moment.

(This exercise was originally from the Berkeley Psychic Institute.)

INVITING IN THE SACRED

Creating an altar is central to Wheel work and is another process that encompasses many realms and levels of learning. It is creating Sacred Space. When we learn how to honor an altar, we learn how to honor ourselves. When we participate in the act of creating an altar, we participate in the mystery of Divine Will.

Because the essence of creating altars is intentionality, an altar can be as simple as a deliberately placed favorite object or stone. When we place or group objects together for the purpose of honoring the Sacred, and we do this with an act of dedicated intention, we partake in the mystery of Divine Will. Our very Earth is an altar, for which was created as an act of Divine Will to honor the Sacred, and in that same way, our bodies are altars.

The important point is the intentionality of honoring. This is also an aspect of the Give-away. By creating altars, we give back some of the devotion (energy) that the Creator/Creatress gave in creating all life. In such an act we participate in the Divine Mystery and take our place of responsibility in partnership. Take your place in partnership with the Divine by creating an altar dedicated to your soul's work and to the good of all.

Study Guide: Inviting in the Sacred

Exercise 11: Create an Altar

What you will need: A space that you can dedicate to the Divine, objects that have meaning for you (such as totems and feathers)

Your altar can be very simple or may be elaborate. Create the altar in a place of honor, and pause before the altar at least once a day. This could be the place you go to light your candle and smudge your body; what you use for the altar is entirely up to you. Anything that pleases your sense of balance and is a symbol of what you want to honor can be used. Some cultures place food items on altars that act as a symbolic “feeding” of the Divine to honor how the Divine feeds us. Pictures of people who have guided us or have meant a lot to us spiritually or pictures or other likenesses of totems are often used to remind us of their essences. Candles or lamps are universally found on altars to symbolize the element of fire, or the light of the world, or to honor the path of love and devotion by lighting the flame of the heart.

Some systems teach that your personal altar may be in a place that is used only for ceremonial purposes and that you may only allow the altar to be viewed by a select few. There is great power in such a dedicated space, although altars do not have to be so formal to be powerful. Putting a favorite object at the base of the lamp on your bedside table can be very powerful even if only you know it is an altar. The most important thing to remember is your intention when creating the altar, the devotion you give to your experience with it, and the pureness of your heart when you place yourself in its realm. The only rule associated with altars is that they be cleaned periodically and kept free of dust. This is another symbolic act of devotion.

As you progress around the Wheel of the Year, you may want to change the items used on your altar to reflect the energies of the season. In the first set of lessons for each of the four cardinal directions—North, East, South, and West—you will be given a complete list of items that represent the energies of that direction. You could use some of the items on each list to create a directional altar for each season that would work in strong relationship with the energy of the season.

Study Guide: Inviting in the Sacred

Exercise 12: Calling in and Releasing the Directions

What you will need: Something to generate sound, such as a rattle or drum, although your voice will do

When traveling through spiritual realms, it is important to know how to connect ourselves; this is our true source of protection. First of all, we must release some aspects of our connection to our physical body in order to call our spiritual body to the forefront. Anytime we center and connect to the Divine, our physical body becomes more vulnerable and less powerful, just as it does during sleep. This could be frightening to the Inner Child, or Pure Self, and it threatens the ego aspect of the personality. The energy of the ego is very dense and is rooted to the physical world. The job of the ego is to keep us safely connected to the physical world. We are spiritual beings, and we would leave our bodies if we did not have something to anchor us here while we experience physical embodiment. By performing an act of connection, we notify our Inner Child and ego that we are indeed taking care of them by protecting our physical body. Secondly, there are many forms of energy in the non-physical realms. All of these energies can serve our soul's path, although some can be frightening to us if we are not ready to handle their power. Calling in connection is the way that we ensure that only the energies that are appropriate for our soul's journey at this time affect us.

A Word of Caution

It is important *not* to practice these exercises while driving or performing some other activity. This is true because of the vulnerable state these exercises put us in and also out of respect and dedication. Our very existence is interdependent with all beings on all levels of reality, and it is disrespectful to our sacred relationships not to give these beings dedicated attention. As we deepen our level of working, we will call on Guides and Guardians in other realms, and we need to have established respectful relationships in order for this practice to be serving. It is also important to be careful about arrogance when working in these realms; arrogance is another form of disrespect that will cause our spiritual work to fail. We must have humility, and we must be authentic and sincere, always willing to drop our false-self masks in order to discern the Divine within.

The Invocation

At the beginning of every lesson, you will find the Invocation Blessing Song. This prayer uses a form of calling in the directions that can serve as a template you can use to invoke protective energies when you are doing Wheel work. It is okay to use this exact prayer in the beginning, and as time goes on, you may adapt the prayer to what your heart is calling you to say. For instance, when addressing the energies of a cardinal direction (North, South, East, or West), you may get a sense that some animal, plant, mineral, or other helper is calling you to notice it, and

you may want to call it forth at that time. Certain helper energies are traditionally found in certain directions: you will be provided with a list of these in the introduction to each of the four directional gates, and they certainly are not the only helpers that work in the direction. Again, different people have different lists, and you may find, for instance, that the helper animals that you encounter while working with the energies of a certain direction are different from the ones found on anyone else's list. The key is to trust yourself and your inner wisdom. There is no one "right" way. For example, although turtle traditionally is an animal associated with the Earth because it is so low to the ground, there are also sea turtles that may want to assist when you are working with the direction and element of water. By making the prayer an expression of your own spiritual voice, you are demonstrating your willingness to accept your power and to take responsibility for fulfilling your sacred potential.

A Process for Calling in the Seven Directions

Before beginning, gather all the materials and objects that you need for the process. Smudge or cleanse your Spirit body in some way (see Exercise 1). To connect to the Divine, people often use a drum, rattle, bell, whistle, conch shell, or some other sound instrument to call in the directions and alert the Spirits of those directions; this sonic driving acts as a sort of spiritual "doorbell." Although such objects are nice and do indeed help to establish a sacred connection, the sound of your spoken words can be enough. The point is not to put off doing the work because you don't have a drum or rattle or some other object. A simple call of "Hello," "Greetings," "Ho," or even "Hey" will work. Remember: The most important thing is the quality of your intention.

It is an act of honoring to face the Direction you are addressing, and it is not mandatory. Traditionally, people start with the East, and that is not mandatory either; let your Spirit be your guide. Beat your drum, shake your rattle, or ring your bell, or whatever you are using, a few times. If you do not have a sound maker, begin by calling your greeting, saying something as simple as, "I call to the Spirits of the East," or "Ho, Spirit Keepers of the North," and so on. Then continue by naming the qualities, energies, animal helpers, and so forth that you want to connect with. See the Invocation Blessing Song that appears at the beginning of each lesson. Turn clockwise to the next direction, shake your rattle or drum your drum, then call your greeting and name the qualities and so on for each of the four cardinal directions. This creates a circle of connection.

Then turn toward the center, look up, and call to the Father Sky; then kneel down, touch the ground or floor, and call to Mother Earth; and then be still and call to (honor) Sacred Mystery at your Center. This completes another circle that creates the sphere of protection. Next, make a statement of intention (see the Invocation Blessing Song for an example), and then begin your spiritual work: visioning, meditation, and ceremony.

Releasing the Directions

When you have finished, it is another act of honoring to release the Directions. By your will you have called their attention to you, and it is only polite that you let them know when your work is complete. Some people release the Directions by reversing the calling-in process, releasing and *thanking* each Direction in the reverse order that they were called in. This truly is a good way to honor these energies; a simple prayer of gratitude, like the one that appears at the end of each lesson, is also honoring.

Sacred Circle

We each contain an enduring spark of that wisdom
at the heart of all creation. Isolated and
unsupported, it is but a small spark. United
with others, those sparks grow into a flame
of illumination and strength for us all.

That strength which sustains and renews each
one of us also sustains and renews our communities,
our organizations, our environment, and the Earth.

Gathering in wisdom circles enables us to move
deeply into ourselves, into that core which continues
to survive, hope, dream, and carry on.

—John Seed

The Circle as a Sacred Symbol

The circle is considered by many people to be the ideal form. Having no beginning and no end, it reflects the eternal continuity of life. There are an infinite number of ways to be with a Sacred Circle, Hoop, or Wheel. Sacred Circles are a place to hold ceremonies, do spiritual exercises, and work and receive guidance. They work equally well for focused personal work or illuminated spiritual practice. Actual physical circles formed naturally by stones or trees or other natural features hold great energies, and so do circles created in the imaginal realm. They are a powerful source of safety and protection and a powerful force for good works, and as such, they serve best when they are always being respected and used in a good way. A Sacred Circle lays out for us the deepest, most basic cycles; the most organic rhythms; and the most fundamental yet ever-evolving truths. Come to the Hoop to be blessed and to draw on its energy for balance and guidance. Even if you are very far away, you can still connect to a Sacred Circle in the imaginal realm and draw on the ever-present holy energy of Creation.

Entering the Sacred Circle

Before entering the Circle, partake of a smudging ceremony or some other form of cleansing, clear your mental blocks, and center yourself. The particular form of cleansing is not as important as the conscious intent to prepare yourself to deepen, listen, expand, and reconnect. Once you are centered and grounded, you may sense that it feels correct to bow or to give an offering as you enter. After you have stepped into the Circle or created a mental Wheel around you, stop for a moment out of respect for the Earth and all the presences that give life and renewal. Acknowledge their gifts and feel your gratitude fully in your body (Eastern traditions call this an “inner smile”). It is always helpful to call to the Directions and the Spirits of the place. Even though they are always present in a wheel, formally acknowledging them supports us to better align with them.

Actual physical circles must be smudged periodically, and if they are outdoors, you will want to feed the circle grounds and “All Our Relations” that give energy to this sacred space. Traditional feeding items are tobacco, cornmeal, or seeds; a hair from your head, this is another

form of the Give-away that symbolizes your understanding of the Circle of Service. Your Give-away to your Circle is in honor of what the Circle gives to you. Many people find it good to honor the beginning and the end of their work at a single point on the Wheel; in other words, they exit the Circle at the same place that they entered.

Working Within the Sacred Circle

Remember to respect others around you and only be in the Circle in a sacred way. Any discordant energy or arguments must find harmonious resolution before entering into the Sacred Circle. Train animals and children to honor the space. If they mess up, teach and re-teach until they learn. Always teach with stories and gentle touch. Animals and children belong in ceremony. Teach ground rules so that they learn to respect space and do not run carelessly or irresponsibly through physical sites.

If there is a fire pit, use it only for ceremony, not as a double-duty picnic weenie-roasting fire. Do not put any garbage in a sacred fire; the teachings of the Great Mysteries are encountered here. Receive them with respect and devotion.

Be aware of the Great Circle of which you personally are a part: your spirit, your body, your emotions, your mind, what you do and say, and how you and your life are flowing in a circular way. Bring your whole self to the Wheel with trust; bring your wisdoms and your ignorance, your strengths and your fragmentations, your joys and your fears, your confidences and your insecurities and offer them up to be integrated, balanced, and brought back into the larger flow of life. Understand that each choice you make, if connected to Source, is another Sacred Circle.

When doing Wheel work, you can work completely or partially in the imaginal realm, visualizing and so on, or you can physically move within the Circle. No matter what the experience is like, it is the intention to change, to listen and respond, and to honor and affirm that creates the power. When doing the actual physical work, proceeding in a sunwise direction—clockwise, circling to the left if you are facing the center—celebrates the rising, circling, and setting of the sun; contrary to the various prescriptions or rules you may have heard, it is not the only good way to proceed. And it is not necessarily “wrong” or “bad” to turn your back on the center or approach the center by any other way than by the “Spirit paths,” and so on. Remember again the importance and power of your intention.

In actuality, there are very few universal rules for working with a Wheel or Sacred Circle or Hoop. It is more in line with circular energies to allow a deep sense of appropriateness to emerge rather than create hard and fast rules. Ground rules around Wheels emerge more from the needs of the particular site and the land that contains it and can be thought of in terms of supportive guidelines for optimal relationship to the energies. Women in particular, or men who want to get more in touch with their Sacred Feminine, may find it helpful to sometimes work in a counter-clockwise (“moonwise”) direction.

Leaving the Sacred Circle

Before exiting, give thanks for what has been received within this sacred space and acknowledge releasing or disconnecting from the energies of the Directions or of Spirit helpers and guides that you may have encountered. Stop again for a moment of grounding and honoring, and then exit.

"Imagine the pain of going to your grave with the feeling of never having been truly seen or heard by anyone. People have commented after a Sacred Wisdom Circle that they don't remember having been 'listened to' so intently in their entire lives. In an ongoing circle, as a member feels more trust, she may choose to reveal more of a painful past, or an anxious present circumstance. When personal feelings are witnessed by others, healing can begin. Not only for the one who speaks, but for those who listen. Your words may resonate with others, and some new truths may surface that is of use to them—all because you took the risk to speak authentically." —from *Wisdom Circles*, by Charles Garfield, Cynthia Spring, and Sedonia Cahill

Study Guide: Inviting in the Sacred

Exercise 13: Honoring Sacred Space

What you will need: Smudge materials (herbs, your shell or bowl with sand in it, matches, and your Spirit feather, although your hands are enough); if working outside, something to feed the Spirits of the place, such as cornmeal or tobacco.

For this exercise, we will follow the steps given in the book "Wisdom Circles" for creating your own sacred circle.

1. Honor the Circle as sacred time and space by using simple rituals to mark the opening and closing, smudging to open and saying the Invocation Blessing Song to close.
2. Ask to be informed by our highest human values, such as compassion and truth; by the wisdom of the ancestors; and by the needs of those yet to be born.
3. Express gratitude and heartfelt appreciation for the blessings and teachings of life.
4. Create a safe Sacred Space for full participation and deep truth telling.
5. Listen from the heart and serve as a compassionate witness for the other people in the Circle.
6. Speak from the heart and from direct experience.
7. Silence is a gift: make room for it.
8. Empower each member to step into his or her authentic self in daily life.
9. Commit to an ongoing relationship with the people in your tribe, and carry the intention of the Sacred Circle into daily life by asking *when, who, how, where, and why* to get to the bottom of any issue that arises.

CULTIVATING AWARENESS

Once you have created sacred space and have invoked a circle of connection, you are ready to begin to truly see. In this program, you will learn how to practice seeing what is really there, instead of clinging to old attachments of what you believe you *should* be seeing. In scientific circles, this seeing what we believe we should see, rather than what is in front of you, is known as “change blindness.” We need to overcome change blindness before we can see what the world is really made of: pure energy.

Study Guide: Cultivating Awareness

Exercise 14: Expanding Your Senses

What you will need: Smudge materials; a candle; a blanket (optional); and a red, juicy apple

Prepare for this exercise by smudging your space and yourself and lighting a candle. Then sit on the floor and gather a blanket around you, or sit on a blanket if you need it for warmth. Read through the exercise first so that you are familiar with what is expected. It could be helpful to record the instructions in your own voice, leaving pauses where necessary, and use that recording to guide you through the process.

1. Pick up the apple and hold it still in your hand. Look at one side of it and notice every detail, including how the light hits it and throws shadows. Notice how it’s really several shades that make up the redness of the color. Notice any blemishes and any other colors you see in the apple. Now trace slowly with your eyes around the outline of the apple and then around the outline of as much of your hand and arm that you can see.

The remainder of the exercise is done with your eyes closed.

2. Feel the fruit with your hands. Feel texture and also temperature. Take as much time as you need to truly feel all you can about the apple.

3. Without opening your eyes, make a dent in the side of the apple with your fingernail and notice what that feels like. Now smell the apple and take a bite of it. Focus on your sense of taste. Now notice your sense of hearing and sense of smell are a part of the experience as well.

4. Continue to eat the apple, and bring into your awareness what the fruit looked like just a few minutes ago, when you held it whole in our hand.

5. Finish the bite you have in your mouth, and with your eyes still closed, set the apple down beside you. Relax your arms at your sides.

6. Without opening your eyes, get comfortable and let your body relax completely. Now explore your surroundings with your sense of touch. Do you feel any breeze or warmth from the sun on your skin anywhere? What does the surface beneath you feel like? Notice its temperature, its texture, its solidness, and its hardness or softness. Now feel with your hands the area around you. Notice the texture again.

7. Move to your sense of hearing. Listen to all the sounds around you. If there are sounds from Nature, focus on those and let any other sounds fade into the distance.

8. Move to your sense of smell. Notice if there are any different smells. Focus on one smell at a time.

9. Now combine the senses. Notice all three at the same time. If this is difficult for you, focus on one sense and then add the others one at a time.
10. Journal about your experiences with this exercise.



Study Guide: Cultivating Awareness

Exercise 15: Build Your Own Car

What you will need: Your imagination, your journal, and a pen

When you free your imagination, you can literally transform reality. When you can only imagine a thing being as it has always been, you call prey to change blindness. In an experiment, kittens raised in boxes painted with vertical lines were not able to see things in their environment made of horizontal lines when they were let out of the box. These two examples of how our perceptual expectations get in the way of really seeing things as they are. When we lose our attachments to what we expect to see, we open a door to perception and increase our ability to see what's really in front of us. This exercise will help you open that door. Practice it often, and record your experiences in your journal.

1. Re-create your automobile in your mind as carefully as possible, including every detail you can remember.
2. When you have re-created your automobile to the best of your ability, begin to focus on each part of it. Notice everything: color, texture, smell, sound, temperature. Choose several of the qualities that you have noticed and describe them to yourself in Nature terms. For instance, if you are looking at the tan color of the paint, you might see it as having the same color and temperature as a smooth sandy beach in the early morning light; or you could experience woven seat covers as having the same texture as a dog's nose when it's dry. Take a moment to experience several aspects of the car in Nature terms.
3. Now let your imagination take over. Begin making some changes in your auto, again using qualities of Nature and using all your senses. You could make these changes humorous for added benefit: make it furry like an animal, make it smell like cinnamon, and have it dance around singing loudly. This step is important because it exercises your imagination as well as your

ability to experience your images filled with the spirit of Nature. Spend some time creating this experience. You may even try to allow your vehicle to change on its own without your instruction. Other things may join the scene. See what comes in; it may surprise you.

4. Now freeze the action of your image, as if you had taken a snapshot of the scene. Put a white border around it to make it even more like a snapshot. Now take that snapshot scene and zoom it away from you as if it were across the room from you. You can tell that it is a picture across the room there, but you can't quite make out what it is a picture of. So you are now imaging a snapshot across a room that must look about 3 to 4 inches in size.

5. Next (this part is fun), have the snapshot scene move toward you growing in size as it comes closer, until the scene surrounds you so that it is life size by the time it reaches you. Notice that the objects in the scene are no longer two dimensional, as they were when they were in a flat snapshot; they are now three dimensional. It is as if you had stepped onto a stage, and the scene is all around you.

6. Now have the scene come alive again around you, and just enjoy the experience for a little while. When that is complete, sincerely thank each part of your scene and let them fade from your awareness so that you are fully back in your room, grounded and aware.



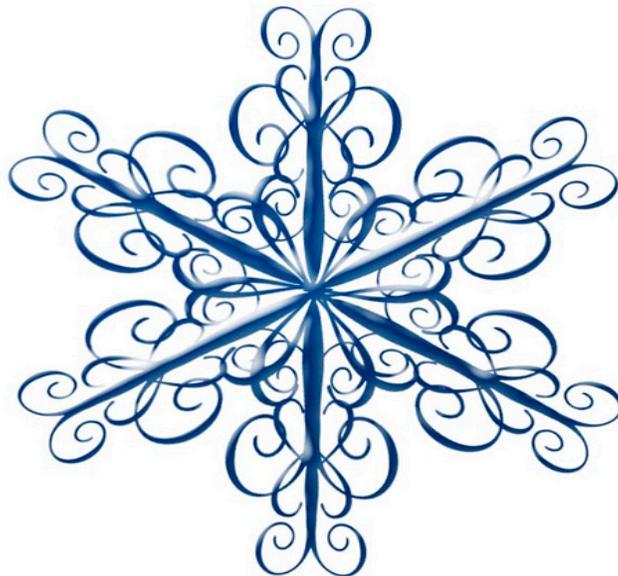
Study Guide: Journaling for Spiritual Growth

Exercise 16: Word to Your Mentor

Look over the glossary words included in this lesson. Copy any especially meaningful terms in your growth journal, rewrite or complete any definitions you would like to change, and add any words and definitions that you feel are missing. Send any new definitions to your mentor.

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Sweet Mystery that is at the Sacred Center, and all Divine Energies, thank you for holding us and cradling us in your protection as we bring wholeness to our hearts and to our world! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! It is good.



Questions for the Introductory Lesson: Week 3

NOTE: If you are taking this program for certification, you must send your answers to the Institute via your private account.

1. Why is centering crucial to ceremonial work of any kind?
2. What are some methods you can use to center?
3. What is “sonic driving” and how can it be used?
4. What’s the difference between centering and grounding?
5. What are some methods you can use to ground?
6. How do you release the Directions at the closing of your ceremonies?
7. How can you heal gaps in your aura?
8. What are some ways you can create an altar?
9. What is the ego’s job?
10. What is change blindness?