



Honoring the Four Seasons in Ceremony

Autumn Equinox

Autumn Equinox is when perfect balance returns. We experience light and dark in equal amounts, celebrating harmony and abundance in the final harvest. The Sun shines directly on the Equator and dances day and night into balance. This Autumnal Equinox is a great time to assess where we might be lopsided on our medicine wheel. Do we spend too much time in our head, overwhelmed with our adult responsibilities of the North? Are we constantly tossed about by the tides of our emotions, swirling in the West? Since the Summer Solstice, the hours of daylight have been longer but now they will be shorter for the remainder of the year.

Expanding Sacred

In this harvest season, we finish old projects and kick off a fall version of “spring cleaning”. Chinese medicine practitioners recommended physical cleansing and detox periods during both spring and fall. This ancient wisdom coincides with the clearing energy of the autumnal and vernal equinoxes. Trees releasing their leaves show us how to let go. Before turning from the warmth of summer and facing the cold of winter, we reflect on all that we have and what we are grateful for; actively seeking to uphold that which is positive. This equinox allows us an opportunity to take an assessment of what is working in our lives and what we are ready to release, just like the trees release their leaves.

Throughout the fall, the rhythm of the solar wheel suggests REST. We slow down to gently observe, absorb and feel gratitude. During the transition we call autumn, we celebrate both bounty and impermanence. Mother Earth asks for trust and intuition as she flares with brilliant colors and loss.

***Meditation for Balancing**

Find ways to honor balance in your life. A balancing meditation may be just the right ritual to harmonize your energy during the Equinox.

<https://www.learnreligions.com/mabon-balance-meditation-2562287>

***Hold a gratitude ritual and bonfire celebration. (Create a bonfire or light a candle in the center of your circle before inviting participants into your sacred space.)**

1. Clear each participant as they enter the sacred circle.
2. Hand out pieces of paper and allow time for each participant to write down what they wish to release and offer to the fire. Ask participants to speak out loud and give energy to what they wish to release, if they feel comfortable. If the participants are willing to speak what they are clearing, the ritual builds power.
3. Call in the Four Directions, Spirits of Place and Nature Spirits along with special angels, totems and guides. Honor the direction of the West and pay special attention to the season of the Autumn Equinox and the purpose for your ceremony.
4. Pass the talking stick and hold space for each person to share what they are grateful for in their life and what they want to celebrate.
5. Sing prayers of gratitude, dance, drum and chant.
6. Offer a collective prayer of thanksgiving and release the circle.

What does the Autumn Equinox mean to you?

Are there recurring themes or feelings you have at this time of year?

How can you tune in and utilize the energy of the Autumn Equinox to enhance your life?

Winter Solstice



The longest night gifts us with time to enter the darkness, fully. We hold our breaths with nature, where life is suspended and quiet. The stillness behind action gathers as we empty and trust our renewal process. Claim your inner resources. At the center of the Wheel we look in the mirror. We see seeds of our intentions, our hopes for the future.

Expanding Sacred

**Solstice flame,
Remnant of First Light,
Daughter of dancing suns,
You flicker with primordial fire.**

**Sister of the Wellspring,
Imbue with peace this quiet place,
Soften our ragged edges,
And beckon to your light
Those who suffer or are lost.**

**Prancing flame,
Kin to all who labor to live,
Breathe into us the radiance of your fire
So we will remember the light from which we come.**

**May this day of turning renew us in midwinter
So spring will find in us a fertile field
Where kindly things can thrive, multiply
And walk with generosity! -Pam Bullingham**

My favorite ceremony to honor the Winter Solstice is the **Giveaway Ceremony**. I love to gather a few friends and sink into the special time that happens before the holiday rush. Winter brings a soft stillness. When we are surrounded by evergreen and candle light, we honor the quiet, intuitive space of Winter in the direction of the North.

This beautiful gift giving celebration can be done any time you want to bring change to your life or create a shift. **Sacred Giveaway** is practiced during one of the two Solstice times of the year (Summer or Winter) because of the great power of these seasonal shifts. Other beneficial times for a Giveaway could be a new Moon, full moon or special eclipse. You can gather a few friends or family together and have a Giveaway Ceremony anytime you like.

How to hold a Giveaway Ceremony:

1-Give a gift to the element of Earth. Pick an object that represents something that you want to grow or attract more of into your life. This might be an object that represents health, love, financial abundance, career success, fertility, you name it. Give this object to the earth by burying it in the ground. You can use a bowl of dirt, if you're doing the ceremony inside your home. By participating in this generous act, you are literally planting your dreams. The object you plant might be a business card for growing career success, a wedding photo for growing the strength of your marriage or a dollar bill for growing financial abundance. Whatever holds power for you is the right object to "plant". I recommend gifting something from nature that represents what you want (like a leaf or a flower and assigning your intention to this object) as you plant it. By using a natural object, we leave no trace and tread lightly on the planet with respect.

2-Give a gift to the element of Water. Pick another object that symbolizes what you would like to cleanse or purify in your life. Make sure this object can be released into a bowl of water or a stream, river or ocean with no harm to wildlife.

3-Give a gift to the element of Air. Pick something you can blow into the air to represent what you want to release in your life. I use seeded paper to write what I wish to release. Next, I tear the paper into tiny pieces and offer it up to the wind. Because I use eco-friendly paper with flower seeds, it is both a release and an offering at the same time.

4-Give a gift to the element of Fire. Think of what needs transmutation in your life. Transmuting energy means using alchemy to change the quality of a particular type of energy. This could be using fire to transmute fear into intuition or anger into power, for example. What emotion or situation in your life is ready to be transformed? Give it to the fire by writing it down and letting the alchemical energy of the fire do the transformation as you watch it change shape. This works great if you have a fireplace or a fire pit.

Remember, there's no wrong way to do a ceremony. I'm only giving you a few ideas to get you started. The more creative you are, the more meaningful the rituals will be for you.

What does Winter Solstice energy feel like to you?

What would you most like to give away to the elements and transform about your life?

There are many ways to honor each Solstice. I've provided a link to my article about the importance of ceremony. I give suggestions about how to hold your own ceremony for different reasons, different times of the year.. You can harness your intention and connect in the heart through the act of sacred ceremony.

Enjoy this article on my website:

<https://evangelinehemrick.com/why-we-need-ceremony-how-to-empower-your-life-with-sacred-ritual/>



Spring Equinox Ceremony

The vernal equinox marks the end of the darkest season. Spring symbolizes growth and fertility, bringing the resurgence of plants, light, animals, new ideas and fresh perspectives. The sun dances us to equilibrium, a time of holy equality. Walk outside and feel the raw possibility in the still winter-torn, wind-blown landscape. We can envision healing, new beginnings. Poised in the season's symmetry, we ask ourselves: **What kind of world do we want to birth?** Spring equinox brings hope. We dance, envision and create anew.

For centuries, civilizations have celebrated rituals around revival, redemption and rebirth. Every Spring Equinox can be a resurrection. There are many sacred ways to celebrate the energy of rejuvenation, growth and blessings.

1-Spring Renewal Cleansing Ritual

Since Spring is about starting fresh, make spring cleaning your home a sacred act along with cleansing your body. Planning a physical detox/cleanse to coincide with both the vernal and autumnal equinox celebrations is very supportive to your shamanic practice.

Get rid of clutter and donate unused items. Once you've cleaned your house with intention, seal the clearing with a smudge ritual to diffuse stagnant energy from winter. Smudging with the smoke of plants is an easy and effective way to move and diffuse energy. Light one end of your smudge stick (with your choice of plants in the bundle) while safely blowing out the flame as you keep one end lit and smoking.

Fan the smoke with a feather up and down and from side to side, honoring the four elements of water, air, fire and earth. Take your smudge stick throughout your home and carefully direct the smoke into every corner. Open your windows and doors, use sound clearing tools to move even more energy through your home. Playing a crystal sound healing bowl, Tibetan bowl or chimes can amplify the clearing work.

Other ceremony suggestions to usher in the fertility of spring include:

2-Floral Bath Rituals 3-Creating Vision Boards 4-Drum Circles

5-Make Your Own Intention Setting Ceremony

<https://www.yogamatters.com/blog/spring-equinox-ritual/>



Summer Solstice Ceremony

Ancient civilizations honored the Sun and celebrated the life-sustaining nourishment that comes from light. This is the time of the year to put your dreams in motion and take inspired action. Use the masculine energy of the Sun to help you accomplish your goals and make things happen. **Summer Solstice** is also a time to celebrate and have fun. Celebrate the power of light with camp fires, music, dancing and fun times with friends.

My favorite ceremony for the Summer Solstice is called the Act of Power. Take some time to think about the most important goal you would like to manifest right now. Set an intention for what you wish to create in your life at this time.

Ceremony is a perfect way to connect with your family and community as you amplify your intention. If you've ever been curious as to how to host your own sacred ceremony or ritual, Summer Solstice is the perfect time to take action and try it!

In the Act of Power ceremony, you will create two shamanic power objects:

- **Life Arrow for manifesting**
- **Death Arrow for releasing**

(Don't let the name scare you, the Death Arrow only represents letting go of blockages.) Items you will need: one small stick, one large stick, cotton string or crochet thread, paper and pen/pencil

Take a walk in the woods and find one small stick and one large stick. The small stick should be thin enough to burn easily. The large stick should be thick enough to be placed in the ground and stay upright.

Your small stick will become your Death Arrow. You will release anything in your life that is holding you back from achieving your goal with this power object.

Your large stick will become your Life Arrow. You will grow and manifest what you most desire with this sacred power tool.

CREATE A DEATH ARROW

On one piece of paper, write down any obstacles, habits or limiting thoughts that are holding you back from achieving your goal. After you have written everything that is limiting you, wrap this piece of paper around the small stick and secure the paper to the stick by wrapping a cotton string around it, tying the string securely. You have now created a Death Arrow. It is time to say goodbye to the blockages that have been holding you back. Burn your Death Arrow in a safe, fireproof container such as a metal bowl, fire pit or fireplace. As you carefully take precautions for safety, watch the arrow burn and visualize releasing obstacles that have held you back from your goal. The effects of this exercise are intensified if you say what you are releasing out loud as the arrow burns.

CREATE A LIFE ARROW

Now that you have cleared obstacles from your path, carefully consider what action steps need to be taken in order to accomplish your ultimate goal. Take some time and write down what you are willing to do in order to turn your dream into a reality. With these written action steps, you are making a commitment to yourself and the Universe. This sheet of paper will contain the promise you are making to yourself.

After you have written down your commitments and list of action steps, carefully wrap the piece of paper around your large stick and secure it by wrapping the cotton thread or string around it and tying securely. The thread you use can be multi-colored and beautiful. You can also adorn your Life Arrow with gemstones, shells, and feathers. Make your arrow beautiful and appealing to you but just remember to use natural embellishments, since you are giving your Life Arrow to the Earth.

Use your Act of Power to make a commitment to yourself, and the universe.

Take your Life Arrow and plant it into the ground. Place your arrow somewhere you can see it often to be reminded of your goal. As you impregnate the Earth with your hopes and dreams, say out loud, “This is my act of power. I now create _____,” and finish by speaking your goal, as if it is your current reality, while you place your stick in the ground.

The beneficial effects of this ritual are amplified if done in a group, but it can also be done effectively alone. Never underestimate the power of a ritual for one. You can still have a very powerful Summer Solstice Ceremony even if no one else is around to do this exercise with you. Sometimes it’s hard to say our hopes and dreams out loud (even if we’re all alone) but there is so much creative potential in the power of our voice.

What commitment are you willing to make to yourself in order for your Act of Power goal to become reality?

Action Step: Make a list of all the things you are willing to do to ensure that your dream comes true.
