***Reluctance***

*Out through the fields and the woods*

*And over the walls I have wended;*

*I have climbed the hills of view*

*And looked at the world, and descended;*

*I have come by the highway home,*

*And lo, it is ended.*

*The leaves are all dead on the ground,*

*Save those that the oak is keeping*

*To ravel them one by one*

*And let them go scraping and creeping*

*Out over the crusted snow,*

*When others are sleeping.*

*And the dead leaves lie huddled and still,*

*No longer blown hither and thither;*

*The last lone aster is gone;*

*The flowers of the witch hazel wither;*

*The heart is still aching to seek,*

*But the feet question ‘Whither?’*

*Ah, when to the heart of man*

*Was it ever less than a treason*

*To go with the drift of things,*

*To yield with a grace to reason,*

*And bow and accept the end*

*Of a love or a season?*

*- Robert Frost*

**Circle Twelve: Surrendering**

For many long years, I have maintained an unpleasant story about Autumn: that despite my best intentions, regardless of my determination to plan and prepare, there is something that always hits me sideways in this season, knocking me for a loop, tearing down everything I thought was solid and secure. I am faced with a challenge; a trial I never expected, which always and inevitably brings me to my knees.

This year is no exception.

The story continues to refine itself as I have become increasingly aware of my own life cycles: it is never the whole of Autumn thwarting me thus, but usually the spin of the wheel turning shortly after Samhain, as we enter the month of November.

I am understanding on a deeper level why this is so. Historically, it has always felt unjust, as if I were a victim of circumstance. Or, maybe even that the gods were having fun dangling me from their cosmic string, spinning me about, making me dizzy, confusing what I thought was reality.

Now, I have come to accept that these times are necessary for my own growth and maturation. I am able to discern how these challenges (different as they are) share a profound commonality: they serve to confront me with my patterns, with my unhealed wounds, and the misconceptions (even lies) I have been telling myself as a coping strategy - an avoidant one, at that.

This time of year forces me to look at my own bullshit, and take accountability for what I have not been acknowledging. It makes crystal clear the many ways in which I have been ignoring the persistent counsel of my own inner voice. It shines an interrogation light on all that continues to remain out of alignment with my values, and who I truly came here to be. It brings into the present moment all of my grief, my anger, and my difficult memories… as well as my ongoing reluctance to have to deal with them, and heal them, again and again and again.

What I have learned well from this story is: there is no escaping it. No easy way out. No place to hide. It comes for a reason, and that reason is my highest good. This is the moment to level up. This is what it means to elevate my own consciousness. This *is* the real work.

There is only one choice, no matter the circumstance, nor the players involved: it is time for me to surrender. Not to give up, not by any means… but to accept that nothing is ever solid and certain. Everything I create will eventually be torn down in order for me to rebuild stronger and wiser. This is the season for humility, for forgiveness of myself and others, for letting go, and letting go even more. This is my new story, and I’m honored to tell it. So be it. Blessed be.

**An Introduction…**

When we consider the word “surrender,” our first thought generally evokes a warlike scene, where one side waves a white flag to beg for mercy from the other, that their lives may be spared from an otherwise almost certain death.

We envision having to give up our own control in a humiliating manner, subjecting ourselves to the power of another.

Even in the spiritual sense, one definition of what it means to surrender is that “a person completely abandons their own will and subjects their thoughts, ideas, and deeds to the will and teachings of a higher power. Surrender is willful acceptance and yielding to a dominating force.[[1]](#footnote-0)

But for our work in 13 Moons, surrendering is rather a humble act of acceptance and self-love. It is a way in which we honor our true selves, rather than submitting unconsciously to the whims of our ego. It opens us to our most authentic inner knowing by giving up the struggle against the reality we have been clutching onto, and fully embracing the totality of what actually is.

When you surrender spiritually, you stop forcing solutions on situations you can’t control and instead trust and have faith that there is a Divine force taking care of everything in a perfectly orchestrated manner. As author Debbie Ford says:

*“Surrender is a gift that you can give yourself. It’s an act of faith. It’s saying that even though I can’t see where this river is flowing, I trust it will take me in the right direction.”*

When we are called to surrender, it is generally accompanied by a sort of ego-death, causing very unpleasant and even terrifying emotions to surface… which is why most of us don’t naturally embrace surrendering. More often than not, we are cosmically forced into it via a traumatic or tragic event - something powerful enough to get our attention and show us that for however hard we’ve been trying, we’re ultimately not really in control.

By surrendering our perceptions, judgments, mental patterns, emotional reactions, and what we consider to be “truth,” we open ourselves up to vantage points from which we may view our lives and relationships in new ways . We can see where action is needed. We gain clarity around changes needing to be made. We learn that even in a state of surrender, we are not powerless, nor have we given up control: the decision for how we will move forward is entirely of our own volition. If we try to run from the path we’re meant to take, we’ll know it soon enough through other even more challenging lessons. But if we do the work and choose correctly, our lives will once again synchronize with the cycles of nature, and we will be in harmony with cosmic flow.

**The Tower**

In the Tarot, it is The Tower card which best represents the teachings of surrender.

When the Tower card appears in a Tarot reading, one can expect the unexpected - massive change, upheaval, destruction and chaos. It may be a divorce, death of a loved one, financial failure, health problems, natural disaster, job loss or any event that shakes you to your core, affecting you spiritually, mentally and physically. There’s no escaping it. Change is here to tear things up, create chaos and destroy everything in its path - but, it’s for your Highest Good.

Just when you think you’re safe and comfortable, a Tower moment hits and throws you for a loop. A lightning bolt of clarity and insight cuts through the lies and illusions you have been telling yourself, and now the truth comes to light. Your world may come crashing down before you, in ways you could never have imagined as you realize that you have been building your life on unstable foundations - false assumptions, mistruths, illusions, blatant lies, and so on. Everything you thought to be true has turned on its head. You are now questioning what is real and what is not; what you can rely upon and what you cannot trust. This can be very confusing and disorienting, especially when your core belief systems are challenged. But over time, you will come to see that your original beliefs were built on a false understanding, and your new belief systems are more representative of reality.

When The Tower shows itself, escape is impossible. You know the structure will come crashing down, one way or another. But there *is* a choice in the matter: you can either hide, choosing to ignore the inevitable, and let a dramatic series of events destroy what you have built; or, you can take the Tower down on your own, brick by brick, stone by stone. Naturally, there is pain involved in either choice. The difference is that one subjects you to chaos, while the other is made consciously and with awareness and intention.

Ultimately, the best way forward is to let this structure self-destruct so you can rebuild and refocus. With a card like the Tower, you have no choice but to surrender to the destruction and chaos, no matter how unwanted or painful. Change on this deep level is hard, but you need to trust that life is happening FOR you, not TO you and this is all for a reason. This destruction will allow new growth to emerge and your soul can evolve.

After a Tower experience, you will grow stronger, wiser and more resilient as you develop a new perspective on life you didn’t even know existed. These moments are necessary for your spiritual growth and enlightenment, and truth and honesty will bring about a positive change, even if you experience pain and anxiety throughout the process.

It’s important to note that The Tower doesn’t always associate with pain and turmoil. If you are highly aware and in tune with your inner guidance system, then this Tarot card can indicate a spiritual awakening or revelation. You may be able to see the cracks forming and take action before the whole structure comes tumbling down. You may create a massive transformation before you reach the point where change is your only option. In its most positive form, The Tower card is an opportunity to break free from the old ways of thinking that have been holding you back.[[2]](#footnote-1)

We will all experience this dynamic in our lives, and for most of us, it will happen much more than once. Some people believe that if we are on a spiritual path, acquiring greater wisdom and expanding in consciousness, that we will somehow arrive at a place in life where we’re no longer required to endure such challenges - that the road will get easier.

However, this is generally untrue.

If you speak to elders, medicine men or women, curanderos/as, they will tell you: the path of enlightenment, or the path of a shaman, is a most difficult one. With greater wisdom comes greater responsibility, and so the challenges never cease - if anything, they become all the *more* difficult, to really put us to the test - to see how we apply the wisdom we’ve already gained and put it into practice. To see how adept we are at letting go of ego. To see how capable we are in opening ourselves to even greater wisdom. This is the real work.

For anyone who has surrendered, or endured a dark night of the soul, you know this to be true: once The Tower has been leveled, you are left with open ground to rebuild - only this time, what you create will be in alignment with the new iteration of the person you’ve become. You shed one skin to grow the next, even more brilliant and beautiful to behold. You close one cycle completely, and open yourself to the options and opportunities of the next.

The wisdom that comes from knowing that our greatest challenges hold the keys to our greatest growth and potential is the same wisdom which cultivates deeper and deeper levels of faith within us. We know intimately, from experience, that we are not pawns in some cosmic game. We are not being punished. And it’s not that life is so unfair.

We can trust that, for reasons we may never understand, these lessons are meant for us. We are presented with obstacles as opportunities for our souls to grow. We are on the spiral path of our own healing, and though it may lead us to places we wish we’d never known, we surrender in acceptance, and what is meant for us is revealed. From out of the rubble, new pathways are cleared, new designs are formed, and new visions are brought to life. This is how we grow. This is how we evolve as individuals, and as a species.

**Faith and Humility**

Spiritual surrendering is, in its simplest form, an act of faith and humility.

It is the acknowledgement that, in our limited human capacity, it is impossible for us to have all of the answers, or to be able to truly and accurately see the big picture of our lives. It is to humble ourselves (and, most importantly, our egos) to accept that what we *think* we need for our lives may not actually be what we *truly* need. It is trusting that there is a Higher Power, and our Unseen Allies, who have partnered with us on these earthwalks specifically for our growth and evolution. It is the wisdom to know that we don’t have to rely solely on our own power or strength, because we have access to (and the support of) something greater than ourselves.

In *A Course in Miracles*, author Helen Schucman advises that the presence of fear is a sure sign that we are relying on our own strength. When we come to rely solely on our own strength and power, we limit ourselves from the opportunities or solutions that may lie beyond our field of vision or awareness. When we surrender to a power of something greater than ourselves, our fear dissolves as we make room for a new host of possibilities and opportunities. We acknowledge that there may be a plan that far exceeds our own vision or understanding of our present circumstance or life. Of course, this doesn’t absolve us of responsibility or the need to take action, but it does open the door for divine guidance so that we can take the next right action.

The art of surrendering is about forgetting what you think you need. It’s about releasing the need to control the outcome or the terms in which the solution manifests. Instead, we look for divine guidance, and seek what will be of the highest good for all. The solution may be wildly different from what we’ve envisioned and may surpass what we believed or thought possible.

The terms of our surrender are our own. We may need to surrender thoughts of self-attack or judgment, or perhaps a particular situation or relationship. Perhaps surrender lies in releasing control, trusting that regardless of the outcome, we will be ok. We ask that our perception may be transformed, that we may see through new eyes, perhaps even see clearly for the first time.

What keeps us stuck is often our attachment - to an idea, a plan, or a relationship that we are trying to push to fit into a specific mold. But we can choose to surrender and allow reality to take on a shape of its own. When we trust in something greater than ourselves, a plan larger than our own, we allow guidance to move through us and direct us to where we are truly to be led.[[3]](#footnote-2)

*“The solution to the problem is made available to us the moment the problem arises. The shift lies in our willingness to see through the lens of love as opposed to the lens of fear.” - Helen Schucman*

**Emotional Shadows: the Root of Our Healing**

While the art of surrendering begins with a sort of mental acknowledgment and acceptance of what truly is and what is being asked of us, it is always accompanied by a plethora of emotions.

The ways in which we react emotionally towards “letting go” is really the root of the work on our spiritual paths, for emotions are the keys of power that can unlock the entryways to our most profound healing. This is what we refer to as shadow work: looking at those memories, experiences, traumas, wounds, patterns and more - which is often rather painful to do.

This is the reason why many people avoid this kind of work, and this kind of consciousness - it can really hurt! It feels so much easier and more comfortable to sweep the painful parts of our lives under the rug, and continue to function on a sort of unconscious autopilot. You can likely think of many people in your life who operate in this way. You might even be able to recall times in your own life when avoidance was the path you chose to take.

Yet, you likely also learned in trying to avoid, escape, ignore, and deny these inner shadows, it is *not* the easier path after all. In truth, there is no escaping, not really. The attempts to do so usually lead us towards even more unhealthy choices - like using drugs or alcohol to numb ourselves, repeating toxic patterns in our relationships, overworking to distract ourselves, or focusing on other compulsive behaviors rather than the pain we are too afraid to acknowledge.

All of these choices bring about their own consequences, generally affecting our mental and physical health. Avoiding our emotions and our shadows not only leaves past wounds unhealed and seeping, but also creates more suffering in our current lives. This is dis-ease. We live in a society where so many suffer from disease simply because they haven’t done their inner work. For those who understand this, we recognize that, in the end, it is far easier to commit to the hard, painful work in the short term rather than remain in increasing pain in the long run.

Each time our shadows present themselves to us (again and again in the serpentine spiralling of our lives), we have the choice to either surrender and face them head on, or use avoidance tactics which will end up creating more toxicity.

Each time we face the shadows and do the work, we level up in our healing journey.

Each time we level up, we gain the wisdom, resiliency, and strength that will help us to better meet the challenges in the future - which is always guaranteed.

We grow in grace, and humility. We deepen our sense of self-respect. We develop greater compassion for the human condition, and all the suffering. We increase our capacity to love.

**Fear**

Fear is often the first emotion which arises when faced with surrendering. This is because the whole premise behind letting go is giving up that which we had assumed was solid or certain. In lieu of stability, we enter the realm of uncertainty… which is a very scary and uncomfortable domain.

Most of us don’t enjoy uncertainty and change. We much prefer knowing what to expect so that we can prepare ourselves accordingly. As we know, even toxic patterns can feel much safer than the prospect of change, because the toxic patterns are, at the very least, familiar. We’ve experienced them before. We’ve developed coping strategies (even though they may be entirely unhealthy or unproductive) to get us through. We know what to anticipate, and even what the outcome will likely be.

It’s the *unfamiliar* which causes so much fear. The questions begin to arise in our minds: “What if I can’t do it?” “What if I fail?” “What if they no longer accept me?” We begin to doubt ourselves, our capabilities, and our capacity. We imagine hypothetical future failures (which aren’t grounded in any kind of reality), and even these imaginary thoughts produce emotional reactions in our bodies.

Subsequently, the emotional reactions produce strong physical reactions: we feel anxious; nauseous; out-of-body. Our hearts feel like they’re racing in our chests, or like they’ve sunk into our bellies. Our appetites and sleep become negatively affected.

The physical reactions then loop around again to our minds. We obsess over the unknown, and the stories we’ve now created about it. We become foggy, distracted, and unable to focus. It becomes difficult to show up fully in our work and relationships. We are unable to be present with ourselves and others.

As such, fear is the primary emotion we need to gently harness. We do this by first becoming conscious of our thoughts - recognizing the mental loops we’ve created from past experiences, and the false narratives we are telling ourselves about the current issues and how they will play out in the future. When we can observe our minds in this way, we may then replace the patterned thinking, and subsequent emotional and physical reactions, with new patterns, and new behaviors.

Rather than a fear spiral into the unconscious abyss, we can elevate our consciousness with the tools we’ve cultivated for this very purpose: conscious breathing; meditation; ritual; spiritual cleanses; physical exercise; proper diet; avoiding vices; journalling; tracking; spending time in nature; seeking counsel from the Elements, our guides, our inner knowing. *This* is the practice.

**Grief**

Another common emotion related to the art of surrendering is grief. Oftentimes, profound grief.

When we feel forced to sacrifice something we desperately long to keep, our grief swells within us, encompassing every facet of our being… if we let it. Of course, we have been trained by the overculture in many ways to avoid our grief. “Just get over it.” “Look at the bright side.” “You can’t wallow in self-pity forever.” “You need to move on.” These are just a few of many phrases we hear - and have maybe even said to others - in times of grief.

But why shouldn’t we feel grief? It is a terrible thing to have to say goodbye to a dream that couldn’t come to fruition, or a relationship that has run its course, or a job that we loved, or a home that was *ours*. It’s hard to have to accept defeat, or feel judged or scrutinized, or to relinquish what we thought was true and important.

Whatever it may be that we are surrendering, we feel attached to it, as if it were part of us - an important part of our lives and our identities. This *is* the ego-death. And like any death, it is something to be grieved.

If you have ever grieved the loss of a beloved, you know that grief is an emotion that comes in waves, and can resurface even long after the loss occurred. Healing, as we know, is a spiral process. We return to certain events again and again, in different ways and at different times. In some instances, grief can feel positively overwhelming, even incapacitating. Other times, it arrives in fits and starts. The important thing is that we allow it.

Learning to welcome grief, even to think of it as an old friend, is the noble way in which to honor it… and release it, bit by bit. And, like an old friend, we can sit with our grief, and ask questions of it: “What does this situation remind me of?” “What other times in my life have I felt this way?” “When did I first experience this?” “What did I wish I had at that time?” “How can I comfort my grief now?” Rather than avoiding the pain of grief, we can endeavor to more deeply understand it, and to more deeply understand ourselves and our own needs.

When we confront our grief in this way, we learn how to gentle ourselves. We become more adept at self-soothing, but not in self-destructive ways like numbing ourselves with chemicals, or binge-watching mindless programs. We become mothers to our own inner child - the kind of mother we always wished we had, or always envisioned we’d one day be.

By facing both our fears and grief head-on, we develop self-trust and self-reliance. We know that while situations and people in our lives may not always be dependable or constant, we can be both for ourselves. We surrender with greater acceptance because we have cultivated faith.

**Anger**

Undoubtedly, anger will be a powerful emotion for many to contend with when they feel forced into surrendering. But it is important to remember that anger is a secondary emotion. It usually serves as a mask for other deeper and more unpleasant feelings, like fear and grief.

Feeling fear and grief is quite uncomfortable for most people; it can make us feel vulnerable, and oftentimes not in control. Because of this, people go to great lengths to avoid these feelings in any way they can. One way to do this is by subconsciously shifting into anger mode. In contrast to fear and grief, anger can provide a surge of energy that makes us feel more in charge, rather than vulnerable or helpless. Essentially, anger can be a means of creating a sense of control and power in the face of vulnerability and uncertainty.

The experience of anger can range from mild irritation, to frustration, all the way up to seething rage. As a matter of fact, even boredom is a mild version of anger in the form of dissatisfaction with what is happening. Feelings of anger can arise in many different contexts: experiencing unjust treatment; hearing a criticism; or simply not getting what you want are but a few of the potential triggers.

At times, anger can be a powerful tool, and even fuel to protect ourselves and others. In the face of grave injustice, for example, our “righteous anger” can help us to stand up to those in power, who seek to unjustly intimidate and control us. However, righteous anger can also become an integral part of a person’s identity, which can quickly spiral out of control. What once helped us to protect ourselves and others might later be wielded as a means of justifying our own poor behavior and choices.

We all experience our emotions in unique ways, and for many, anger is a challenging one to overcome. When we’re so angry that we “see red,” all rational and logical thought can be nearly impossible to maintain. This lack of anger control usually stems from learning unhealthy anger management tools during our childhood, or, because we have experienced severe trauma where lashing out in anger became our primary coping mechanism.

When we experience anger and rage, we would ideally have the consciousness to recognize the emotion, as well as the physical sensations it elicits. Using healthy coping skills (deep breathing, meditation, physical exercise, etc), we can seek to diffuse the intensity of our anger.

Once we have calmed ourselves and created a sense of safety, we can then dig into what the primary emotion behind our anger truly is, and focus on the deeper work of healing those fears and grief rather than allow anger to distract us… potentially causing harm to ourselves or those around us.

**Compassion, Forgiveness and Love**

While we delve into the often complicated, deep work of confronting our shadow sides and the challenging emotional patterns that surface, it is so helpful to remember the transformative tools available to us through the teachings of compassion, forgiveness and love.

As previously discussed, when we submit to spiritual surrendering, we are often required to sacrifice something we’ve been holding onto: a plan, idea, relationship, attitude, behavior, etc. This “letting go” brings complicated mental and emotional patterns to the surface, offering an opportunity for us to explore their roots more deeply so that they might be transformed.

In the process, we may be required to deal with some very challenging and uncomfortable situations. We might be faced with our own self-judgments and limiting behaviors, including self-sabotage. We may be confronted by difficult humans, who push the buttons that trigger our deepest wounds. We might feel like the rug has been pulled out from underneath us and panic, scrambling for some semblance of safe ground. In each of these examples - and in *any* others you might think of - the situation and those involved (including ourselves) can only benefit from offerings of genuine compassion, forgiveness and love. Thus, these must be our driving forces.

**Compassion**

Compassion is the first step. Without compassion, it is likely impossible for there to ever be true forgiveness or love. Compassion is the ability to put ourselves in another’s shoes. It is to understand the human condition, and the reality that no one - not even those who may seem to lead the most privileged lives - are free from suffering.

As humans, we have all come here to learn very challenging lessons, unique to our own spiritual development and evolution. What may be experienced as a curse to one of us may be a blessing to another, and vice versa. Therefore, we can never presume to truly understand anyone’s life path, nor their actions or choices. Our job and prerogative should simply be to understand our own.

When we commit to a spiritual path, or a healing path, we become excavators of our own lives. We dig far beneath the surface to our darker depths, where the fragmented parts of ourselves lie in wait, hoping to be exhumed and once again made whole. In this tiresome work, we will be confronted with not only the suffering we have endured, but also the suffering we have made others endure by our choices, words, and actions. We will face our own guilt, shame, regret and remorse.

Ideally, we will learn to offer ourselves love and compassion, even for our worst mistakes. When we are able to do this for ourselves, we understand how important it is to do for others, too.

Sometimes, it may not feel fair. Particularly when the actions or words of others feel like a direct violation of our values and sense of justice. It is hard to offer compassion towards someone whom we could never even begin to understand. We make things complicated, thinking like this, going into the minutiae of humanity, and why people do the things they do.

Compassion, forgiveness and love are actually much simpler than all that - and yet, quite paradoxically, seemingly so incredibly difficult.

We have compassion for others because we want compassion for ourselves. When we explore why we have done the horrible things we’ve done in our lives, it is usually related to a horrible experience we endured, ourselves.

There isn’t a human alive that was born into this world corrupt, mal-intended, or evil. You would never look at a baby and think such a thing. Something/some things *happen* to that baby, that child, that adolescent, that young adult which shapes them, conditions them, and teaches them to be hateful, harmful, distrustful, lacking empathy, lacking honor… lacking love.

What if you, with your own powerful heart, could offer that baby, child, adolescent, or young adult (within that wounded person) the compassion, forgiveness and love they truly needed, and quite likely, still desperately need?

**Forgiveness**

This kind of selfless compassion then segues into forgiveness. In many ways, the two may seem interchangeable: when we embody compassion, we are able to forgive; when we are able to forgive, we embody compassion.

There are many beautiful quotes and adages about forgiveness: “True forgiveness is remembering without pain.” “Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself.” “To err is human. To forgive, divine.” “Forgiveness is the best revenge.”

Like compassion, forgiveness can be hard to come by when we feel that an offense is so unjust, it is simply not worthy of forgiveness. Yet, if we truly understand the human condition, and we really believe that no beings were ever born inherently evil, we may offer forgiveness for anyone.

Andean medicine man, Alonso del Rio, shares some very poignant revelations on forgiveness:

*In regards to forgiving those things that are unforgivable, yes, this is true - some things are truly not worthy of forgiveness. But you are not worthy of carrying the poison of resentment, judgment and anger. Those things are not worthy of who you came here to be... Forgiveness is no longer an option, it is an obligation.*

Forgiveness is not just about the other. It’s for your own capacity to fulfill your true purpose. Forgiveness is, in particular, the capacity to let go, to release the suffering, the sorrows, the burdens of the pains and betrayals of the past, and instead to choose the mystery of love. Forgiveness shifts us from the small separate sense of ourselves to a greater capacity which renews the whole. As the *Bhagavad Gita* says, “If you want to see the brave, look to those who can return love for hatred. If you want to see the heroic, look to those who can forgive.”

Forgiveness does not mean that we condone what happened in the past. It’s not to forget, or rewrite history. In fact, forgiveness might also include quite understandably the resolve to protect yourself and never allow similar situations to happen in the future.

In her book *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, Dra. Clarissa Pinkola Estes writes:

*Some people, by innate temperament, are more easily able to forgive than others. For some it is a gift, for most it has to be learned as a skill. Essential vitality and sensitivity seem to affect the ability to pass things off.*

*High vitality and high sensitivity do not always allow wrongs to be passed off easily. You are not bad if you do not forgive easily. You are not a saint if you do. Each to her own, and all in due time.*

*To truly heal, however, we must say our truth, and not only our regret and pain but also what harm was caused, what anger, what disgust, and also what desire for self-punishment or vengeance was evoked in us.*

*The old healer of the psyche understands human nature with all its foibles and gives pardon based on the telling of the naked truth. She not only gives second chances, she most often gives many chances.*

*How does one know if she has forgiven?*

*You tend to feel sorrow over the circumstance instead of rage. You tend to feel sorry for the person rather than angry with her/him. You tend to have nothing left to remember to say about it all. You understand the suffering that drove the offense to begin with. You prefer to remain outside the milieu. You are not waiting for anything. You are not wanting anything. There is no lariat snare around your ankle stretching from way back there to here. You are free to go.*

*It may not have turned out to be a happily ever after, but most certainly there is now a fresh Once Upon a Time waiting for you from this day forward.*

**Love**

This is likely the most important lesson we come to master in our lives: how to become embodiments of true love upon this Earth. In many indigenous cultures, it is said that love is the first and the most important teaching. It is the one we are meant to return to again and again. When love becomes our primary focus, and we seek to correct our thoughts, speech and behaviors so that they are purely loving, we become enlightened. Which is likely why there have been so few “enlightened” humans throughout time - because embodying love in this way is to truly surrender the ego and the self on behalf of the whole of existence.

Another teaching offered by Alonso del Rio, from his book *Los Cuatro Altares*:

*“As multidimensional beings, we not only receive the great gift of existence, but we can also develop in other dimensions, such as consciousness, to be able to achieve the fullness of being that is nothing less than true love. Existence, consciousness and love are the first manifestations of the divine principle. From this position, love can be seen as a state of consciousness, the highest level that we can attain, and consciousness can be seen as the greatest and most loving state of inclusion. There can be no love without consciousness, nor can there be consciousness without love. Existence is a gift from our creators; you do not have to pay anything to exist, nor do you even have to deserve it. Love and consciousness are delivered to you like a seed, and only when their infinite magnitude is appreciated can they grow to fulfill the divine purpose.”*

With compassion, forgiveness and love as our driving forces in these moments of surrender, we effectively position ourselves to gain immeasurable growth on multiple levels.

We replace our negative thoughts about ourselves and others with thoughts of compassion, forgiveness and love and decimate the ego binds to our own mental patterns and dis-ease. When we are genuinely coming from a desire to want to bring more love into the situation, opening ourselves to more loving and compassionate solutions to our problems, we are following our true path, and fulfilling our divine purpose. This, in turn, affects our emotional reactions. In fact, we become less reactionary. We search for the better thought, and the better feeling, and relieve ourselves of our own unconscious suffering.

We accept that though this course of action may not be acceptable to others (who are likely still stuck in their own unconscious patterns), we do not follow this course for approval. This is the path we choose to take for the highest good of us all, good whether or not others have the capacity to understand or reciprocate. We do the work on ourselves, first, and then offer the same to everyone. Our consciousness grows, and our capacity to love grows right along with it.

**Sharing the Wisdom: Preparing Your Ritual**

Use this space to consider how you would honor this sabbat in a ritual way, whether for yourself or for others. This is meant to be a loose guide to inspire you, and to build confidence in your own intuition, vision, and abilities to incorporate more ritual in your life.

1. **What would your ritual space look like/what environment do you envision?**
2. **What items would you include on your altar? What do they represent to you?**
3. **What Elements would you include? How will you include them? And why?**
4. **What words do you feel should be spoken or sung? You might jot down your ideas, and create a loose outline to follow.**
5. **What is the best way for you, personally, to connect with this sabbat? How will you demonstrate that through ritual action?**

**Reflections and Integration**

Going back through your life in increments of 5 years, reflect upon this season/sabbat in the Wheel of the Year and what it has meant to you in those various stages of life. Use these questions as a guide:

* **What memories stand out to me the most about this season in each stage of life?**
* **How did this season/sabbat make me feel emotionally? Physically?**
* **How do my past experiences of the season/sabbat correlate to the present?**
* **In my highest vision, how would I best connect with this season/sabbat?**
* **From this year forward, what changes might I make to align myself more with the energies of this season/sabbat?**

1. From Wikipedia [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. From Biddy Tarot [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. From “The Art of Spiritual Surrender and Releasing Attachment to Outcomes,” by David James di Pardo [↑](#footnote-ref-2)