

The Bones of Mystery School 2005

Concepts and Ideas from Past Mystery Schools

The Labyrinth, Numerology and Tarot

The Labyrinth

The Tarot: A Perspective

Dedication: The Life of a Dedicant

Magic: Entering the Realm of the Archetypes

The Four Levels of Reality

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Dear Mysteries

January, 2005

Welcome to Mystery School.

The Bones is for those of you who are new to Mystery School. It offers you the bones of past Mystery School experiences. Shards of philosophy, fragments of magical work; this booklet contains the essence of the past experiences that shape our current work.

You are joining us just after our 10th anniversary year. This booklet holds our philosophical history. As you read it, you will be walking through the years with us. At the end of the booklet, you will be standing at the beginning of 2005. Step into this year and you will take a part in creating the history that will represent 2005 in next year's edition of *The Bones*.

The bones endure time. The past of any organization offers you a peek into the subconscious, the history, of that organization. If the past is captured by the bones of buried experiences, then the future is possibility waiting to take form. We are the Shamans who call both into life.

Each year begins anew. We stand in the center, in that place between past and future, that place called "now". Standing on the bones, together, we reach for the stars. As we do...may we touch the fingertips of Mystery.

May our past enhance your future.

Welcome to the coming year.

Cynthia Jones

The Bones of Mystery School

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The Labyrinth, Numerology and the Tarot

by Cynthia Jones
- Mystery School 2002 -

Seven is a significant number in metaphysical philosophy. Seven observable planets; as above so below...did we find those planets mirrored in ourselves as seven energy centers in the body? Do we see them again as the seven colors of the rainbow? Do we sing those seven planets as the notes in the scale? Do we walk them as seven circuits in the labyrinth?

Here is how the Tarot works with this metaphysical number. There are twenty-two Major Arcana cards. The Fool, whose number is zero, travels three progressions of seven. In each circuit, he takes on a personality, a past, a future, a pattern. When he reaches the center, out he goes. Then...in again. Three times seven...the labyrinth was so compelling that we dedicated 2003 and 2004 to retracing our steps through it as an archetypal journey.

The first article is a summary of the labyrinth from Mystery School 2002. But first, here is the Joseph Campbell quote that inspired the year.

*“The labyrinth is thoroughly known;
we have only to follow the thread of the hero’s path.*

*Where we thought to find an abomination,
we will find a God.*

*Where we have thought to slay another,
we will slay ourselves.*

*Where we have thought to travel outward,
we will come to the center of our own existence.*

*And where we thought to be alone,
we will be with all the world.”*

Joseph Campbell

The First Rung - Self

The Magician's Challenge: I am.

Self - awareness, Self-claiming, Self-referencing, Self-disclosure

“In every man’s unconsciousness there is an eternal image of the hero, the Self.”

Richard Roberts

From Joseph Campbell...

“The hero is the one who comes to participate in life courageously and decently.”

“The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are.”

“Where you thought to slay another, you will slay yourself.”

This is the self you must find to begin the hero’s journey. How do you begin to discover and define your hero self?

The Second Rung - Exchange

The Priestess' Challenge: In relationships - Sensitivity to Others.

Interaction, Inter-dependence, Inter-personal, Inter-related...

The second rung asks you to live in exchange. Take the hand of each person you pass. Give up that hand. Touch another, give up that touch. In this rung, touch and be touched by others in life’s dance. First we find ourselves but, then, that self is changed by every exchange. As the sea shapes the shore, we are shaped by life as it touches us. We are touched by life as it shapes us. We live in endless exchange.

“Where I thought to be alone, I will be with all the world.”

“The spirit is really the bouquet of life. It is not something breathed into life, it comes out of life.”

Joseph Campbell

What do you value in relationship? How can you be aware of and responsible for your impact on others...while knowing that, each person you interact with brings their own perspective, desire, need, fear and sacred wound to the moment?

How do relationships enable you to be more of who you truly are?

When do they demand that you be who you truly are?

When do they ask you to deny who you truly are?

The Third Rung - Expansion

*The Empress' Challenge: To grow, to reach, to stretch,
to be filled and, out of the fullness, to fill the world around you.*

“Where we thought to travel outward, we will come to the center of our own existence.”

The third rung asks you to expand. Be filled. Reach beyond the edges of all that you know and make agreements with the unknown and the unknowable.

“People talk about the meaning of life; there is no meaning of life. There are lots of meanings of different lives and you must decide what you want your own to be.... You decide what the meaning of your life is to be.”
Joseph Campbell

The possible you, the possible world - what are your goals?

Are you someone now that you wouldn't have imagined as yourself five years ago?

Who do you imagine yourself to be in five years, and how can you support your own growth?

The Fourth Rung - Stability, Foundations, Sacrifice

The Emperor's Challenge: How can you make sacred the world that you live in?

The fourth rung...this center - the heart center - is the center of the journey, but not of the Labyrinth. This rung is the turning point, a place between the worlds. This circuit, not the center, is the place of sacrifice. In the center of the labyrinth, a monster might devour you; a god might liberate you, a truth might tell you; a dream might find you. To reach the center, sacrifice is required. Give up the past and step into the present. Make sacred.

“Only the best are sacrificed. Being sacrificed is a way to go home.”

Joseph Campbell

Will you give yourself to life?

If the answer is yes, what are the Rites of Sacrifice that honor your gifts and your giving?

What are the gifts that life lays upon the altar of your day?

What Gods and Goddesses give themselves to you daily?

What do you give them in exchange?

What keeps you in the past? What draws you into the future?

Standing between the past and the future, sacrifice *makes sacred* now.

Give to the past that which is past.

What is past that you can leave on the altar of the past, so you can be present in the present day?

Give imagined outcomes to the future.

What concerns, imagined events and possible reactions can you lay on the altar of the future, so you can be present in the present day?

The Fifth Rung - Moving Beyond Form

*The Hierophant's Challenge: Meaning takes you beyond logic;
hope transcends the obvious.*

“Where you thought to find an abomination, you will find a God.”

What is the secret of divinity? What dwells beyond the possibility of explanation?
What do you believe in?

The Sixth Rung – Resolution

The Lover’s Challenge: A part...we are all a part of our times.

We are children of our culture.

*How do you work with others to create a community based on a common unity,
a unity of values, intentions and agreements?*

How do you find your place in a community? How do you discover the consensual reality called time, place, and culture? How do you get along with others?

The Seventh Rung - Contrast - Containing the paradox

The Charioteer’s Challenge: Apart, separate, unique...

how do you include those who are different?

What is your unique gift? What sets you apart?

How do you, as a member of a group, community or culture, include those who are different? How do you support differences? How do you contrast with your group, your times, your culture? What makes you unique? What makes you different?

Here is another way to say it....

Entering the maze, walking the mystery.

Who walks this path?

Before there can be a journey, there must be one who is willing to travel.

For mystery to exist, one must be wise enough to wonder.

Enter the labyrinth.

The first rung - Self

Heritage

Before we walk, we must have feet.

Before we walk, there must be ground beneath us.

Whose lives have made the soil, whose bodies have made the earth?

On whose bones do you stand?

The second rung - Exchange

Contracts

Each step we take is a promise, a pledge,
a contract of propulsion.

We sacrifice the ground that holds us to step into an unknown future.

Sole to soul - contact, contract,

May the mark you make be worthy of your signature.

The third rung - Expansion

Secrets

Shhh....

Pretend you didn't see what I pretend I didn't do.
A moment scooped out of time,
a grain of sand denied,
a silent tear falls from a blind eye
and fills the footprint that no one made.

The fourth rung - Foundation

This rung is the center of the journey - the heart and the turning point.

Sacrifice

I lay myself in the arms of life.
My desire is not to feed my hunger,
I hunger to feed my kin and kind.
I make sacred the world I know.
I make sacred the world I want to know.
On the altar of continuing life,
I lay my day.

The fifth rung - Beyond Form

Beyond Form - Transcendence

What do we transcend?

Ourselves, our past, our buried beliefs;
Beyond ourselves we see ourselves.
Architects of the future,
we lay patterns in our souls.

The sixth rung - Resolution

Resolution....

In all the treasures sought and stolen,
no one can steal a kiss.
Some treasures can't be taken,
they can only be given.

The sixth contains the seventh.
Only the beginning believes in the end.
Heaven reaches for the earth,
The Earth, she rises - eager to comply.
A sacrament of balance is found in the blink of two Truths passing, two passing truths.
One pause, a sigh.
Dissolution, resolution, suspension.

The seventh rung - Contrast

Brief forever,
eternity in a moment -
today swirls in tomorrow's cup,
we drink the brew of time
and remember days to come.
Embodied Transcendence.
We are all time has.
May she use us well.

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The Labyrinth
by Susie Nightowl
- Mystery School 1998 -

The Labyrinth at Diana's Grove is situated in the meadow just across the road from the lower pavilion. It was created at the Week Between The Worlds in 1996. I remember watching as the paths were mowed into the grass and the final pattern came into being. I was one of the first to walk it, and the experience touched me forever. It was a physical way to bring mythic reality into my life. It was an initiation for me. And labyrinths have fascinated me ever since. I have done reading and research, taught workshops, meditated, walked the labyrinth countless times, and accepted this ancient tool as a ritual symbol in my life.

The labyrinth we have here at the Grove is the classical seven-circuit labyrinth, meaning that there are seven paths to the center and then out again. This is the same pattern that existed in ancient Crete, famous in mythology and at least several thousand years old. It exists here and now on this land as a magical pathway to the inner realms of your own Mysteries. Seven paths, twisting and turning, to the center and then out again. Seven levels of reality. Easily related to the seven chakras, the energy centers of the body/mind.

But this is not a linear progression, like counting from 1 to 7 and you're done. You actually enter the labyrinth at the third level, the center of power. From there you go back, to the second level - creativity and sexuality - and then the first - the root chakra - the physical level of safety and security. This path is the longest, and from here there is a sudden twist, to the fourth level, the place of the heart, and from there to the seventh, the crown chakra, the Divine. It is at this level that I invoke the Deity or Archetype that I am working with at the time. From there the path takes you to the sixth level, the third eye of intuition, and then the fifth, level of voice and communication. After this you enter the center, the still point. And then proceed outward, back the way you came, seeing it all from a different perspective now.

This is my personal journey with the labyrinth. It has become a metaphor for living my life; that events do not really happen in linear fashion; that in fact there are twists and turns and leaps, and it really is a spiral dance. Once you enter, the path leads you. There is no getting lost. There are no dead ends, no blind alleys, and no choices to make about which direction to take. There is only the path in front of you, and your only choice is whether to enter and take the journey. It becomes a walking meditation.

Each time I have entered the labyrinth seeking an answer, asking for guidance, approaching the Oracle, I have received insights and revelations by the time I walk out. And the answers are always surprising, even startling....this is not a process of logic. It is a gift from the Mystery.

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The Tarot
by Cynthia Jones
- Mystery School 1997 -

The Tarot is very present in Mystery School. The Book of Shadows can be used as a Tarot Journal. If you aren't familiar with the Tarot, don't run out and get a book to learn the meanings of the cards. Let the cards themselves teach you. Here is my suggestion. Get a Rider-Waite-Smith deck (the Universal Waite is my favorite Rider-Smith deck). I recommend this deck because it loves to teach the tarot to those who look at it.

Pull a card. Look at it. If it is a Minor Arcana Card, you are the main character. All you need to do is ask yourself what you are doing, how you feel about life and your situation. Make up a story about yourself at the moment that the "photograph" was taken. Yes, there is more to it than that and the next few pages will give you that "More". If the card is a Major Arcana card, you have invoked a Major Teacher. What do you think that teacher wants you to know?

Here is a little about the Tarot from the 1997 Mystery School.

You hold a dream in your hands...a dream that has not yet told its story in the mind of a dreamer. The Goddesses are there. The Gods are there. All of the human experiences are there; the challenges of thought and heart, authenticity and action. You hold all of the possibilities.

A pattern is chosen, a question or a design that will call the dream into form. You shuffle the cards and all that will be, can be, or has been, dances. The cards move in the random waves of time. As you shuffle, lives are lived, fortunes won and lost. Love is found and hearts are broken by the interactions of the stories that you hold; but you know nothing of the shifting fates you hold in your hands. Then you stop. You come to a place of completion. The story you now hold in your hands is yours.

One by one, you pick and lay out the cards. Your dream lies face down, unseen; it waits before you. Card by card, the dream is called into awareness. Each piece is both whole and part of a whole. Each card tells a story with many possible meanings; perhaps one is true. Perhaps all are true. The story shifts as the different pieces are added. Your internal reality is externalized.

Here is a possible future. You can take it in your hands. You can heal the hurt you see before you. You can find the solution to your fears, the healing for your pain. You can add to and cover up, you can rearrange the pattern. You can call in the Archetypes. You can be the active designer of your own prophetic dream.

Once seen, the future has already been changed by your awareness of the patterns of probability.

Magic is the art of changing consciousness at will.

Tarot and Entering the Realm of the Archetypes

Tarot, regardless of the theories about its cultural origin or its ancestral roots, is a system of divination. Divination - to speak with the Divine - be that the wisdom within or the wisdom of a higher consciousness. Although there are many forms of divination and divinatory cards, a Tarot deck follows a specific form. It has four suits with ten cards each crowned with a family of royalty cards. These cards are called the Minor Arcana. The deck is completed with 22 Major Arcana trump cards.

Minor Arcana - The Minor Mysteries

Arcana means teaching or mysteries. The minor mysteries of the Tarot are the numerological progression experienced in each element. The progressing numbers describe the socialization of the element as it becomes more complex. The Royalty cards express the faces of mastery in each element.

Early Tarot decks from the 1400s to the late 1800s had minor Arcana that looked like our playing cards. Each card had the symbol of the element and a number. The symbol was often repeated to indicate the number. The only pictures were on the twenty-two major Arcana cards. To begin with the obvious, the element of water is symbolized by cups in the Tarot and hearts in our playing cards. This suite tells the story of the heart. The suite of disks or pentacles depicts financial or material concerns; it became diamonds. These elements are feminine. They are red in our playing cards. Rods or wands became clubs. And swords, giving up their war like association, became spades. This suite drifted the furthest from its original depiction. These masculine elements are black. The colors hint at the mystical parentage of our playing cards. The Major Arcana disappeared almost entirely. Only the Fool remains in the form of the joker.

Tarot is a blending of elemental wisdom and numerology. Not an abstraction, but geometric shapes building in complexity as the numbers progress. Ace, one, has the simple absolute focus of a point; it is unchallenged and self-defined. Two gives the situation all of the complexity that is created when we encounter another point of view; when we share our world with another, when dialog and exchange begin. At three, the line takes shape. A triangle or pyramid is created. Four gives us the stability of the square, four sided and dependable. And so on...the shapes evolve, becoming more and more complex.

A reader would combine the element and the number to tell the story. She did not have pictures to read, nor did she have books to tell her the secrets of each card. Although Tarot is associated with the Cabala and Jewish mysticism, it was also the divinatory tool of uneducated mystics who read the truth in patterns and the human soul, rather than in books. Early Tarot - cards read around the fire by exotic travelers who passed through the village - was not the tool of scholars. It was this very heresy that made Tarot dangerous. In a time when education was the province of very few and the privilege of class or the monastery, the Tarot reader could grasp the past and future of Kings and kingdoms without the sanction of privilege. Therefore it was dangerous to the structures of power.

Today it carries the same key - a view into the psychological depths - without the sanctions of the psychological community. Tarot is a tool that will access the subconscious and the deep self of both the therapist and the client. This key is still carried by those mavericks who work outside the gates of traditional knowledge.

20th Century Decks Pictorial Minor Arcana vs Numerical Minor Arcana

Before we can go on to discuss Tarot, it is important to know the subconscious of most modern Tarot decks. When the Minor Arcana of your deck has pictures, you have stepped from a numerical-elemental story into an artist's story about the meaning of this elemental challenge. As a reader, your job is to "read the picture" that is before you.

This is a picture in the life of the one for whom you are reading. The inquirer, the one you are reading for, may be the main character in the card or this may be a situation in her life. The question will give the context for the card's story. The picture tells about the relationship of the inquirer to her thoughts, conversations and social interactions (Swords); his energy and spiritual truth or essential self (Wands); her emotions (Cups); or his daily, material life (Disks). Books will tell you what other readers have seen as they look at the cards. They will tell you what the artist intended when she or he drew the card. But Tarot is a visual medium, not a reference to recite a particular author or point of view. To read a card, look at the card. Translate the object into its symbolic affiliation - Sword to thoughts, Cups to emotions, etc. and tell the story that you see in the picture. You might even ask if that picture speaks to the inquirer or what they see happening in the card.

In the late 1800s, a mystical order called the Golden Dawn was formed in England. Tarot was one of the mysteries learned by an initiate. The leader of that order drew a Tarot deck; all of the initiates copied it by hand and learned his interpretation of the cards and their individual meanings. Two members of the Golden Dawn created a revolutionary Tarot deck. Pamela Coleman Smith, an American set designer, was commissioned by A. E. Waite to create a Tarot deck. She drew the first pictorial Minor Arcana. It was published in 1910 by Rider and is known as the Rider deck or the Waite deck.

Regardless of Tarot's rich history, its affiliation with the Cabala, and its metaphysical roots, Pamela Coleman Smith gave us pictures. Those pictures have determined the meaning of the cards in most of the decks you will see today. I don't know of a well-known modern deck that is not influenced by her pictures. No numerology is required. Often, the elemental symbology is ignored and each picture is read literally. The art of reading cards is the ability to offer the symbolic and literal possibilities to inquirants and allowing them to find meaning within meaning.

The influence of the Golden Dawn on modern Tarot was reinforced when a second brilliant deck developed from the same school of thought and was finally published. The Thoth deck was conceptualized by Aleister Crowley and painted by Lady Frieda Harris. Both creators were members of the Golden Dawn. The Crowley-Harris deck has an abstract, but very expressive Minor Arcana. A key word profoundly summarizes each

painting. The Rider Waite Smith deck and the Crowley-Harris Thoth deck are the parent or grandparent decks for most modern Tarot decks.

Just as the Rider-Waite-Smith deck brought the Minor Arcana to life, the Crowley-Harris deck gave rich stories and readability to the Royalty. In the Crowley-Harris Minor Arcana, the Royalty are the only cards with people on them. They bring complexity and dimension into the Royalty, which was previously known by understanding the role of each character within the court. What does a Knight do? What is the role of the Princess or the Page?

Both of these decks were born from the Golden Dawn's concepts of the cards and from a system of ceremonial magic. Other decks have changed Swords and Wands to reflect a different elemental association. An individual artist or conceptualizer may choose to draw a deck to reflect her or his personal philosophy, but one of these two decks is often what they are adapting. When you choose a pictorial deck, look for two qualities. Do you like the pictures? Will the deck tell rich stories in your hands?

Pull a card in response to a question. If the only story that is present is: I see 2 (3, 4, 5) people standing with a stick (cup, sword, etc), the deck will not live for you. Well-designed decks are often ambiguous. The expression or action of the main character is neutral rather than definitively positive or negative. The Tarot will describe situations, not outcomes. Many artists or conceptualizers wanted to make sure that you will not miss their personal viewpoint on a card, so their drawings are more leading.

Choose a Tarot deck as you would choose a therapist. I want a deck that offers me a glimpse of deep internal processes, told with symbolic information. I want the inquirer to tell me about the rightness or wrongness of the situation. Is Love wise or foolish? Is winning always the best thing to do? Is leaving without saying goodbye an act of cowardice or self-preservation? Does that answer differ if you are the leaver or the left? Is loss always a tragedy or can it be a release?

Pamela Coleman Smith's Minor Arcana cards are a great gift. Many people think her images are the original Tarot deck...and they might be right.

Many of the decks that followed were designed for a specific reason. The Crowley-Harris deck is abstract and multi-cultural. The Mother Peace deck is round. It was the first widely distributed deck with a feminist approach. Daughters of the Moon is a radical feminist deck with all male characters eliminated. Tarot of the Old Path and Robin Wood told the Tarot in Wiccan symbology. Salvador Dali put his own dark and mystical personality in his deck. Carol Bridges' Medicine Woman Tarot is a Native American philosophy retold through the cards. The Mythic Tarot has carefully woven the Minor Arcana stories to retell four Greek myths. Barbara Walker has told a complete history of terror and abuse through her deck. Not all decks are designed with card readings as their highest use.

Some decks are redrawn and reinterpreted directly from Ms. Smith's original pictures: Morgan Greer, Hansen Roberts. Some decks are commercial remakes designed to broaden sales by aiming their pictures at a new market or to capture purchasing trends. The most important criteria for choosing a deck are: Do you like the pictures? Does the deck come to life in your hands?

The Elements

Air, Fire, Water, Earth -- Swords, Wands, Cups, Pentacles

Yes, the four suites tell the elemental stories. When decks were first created, they weren't designed to tell the story of the elements, as they are now used in earth-based spiritualities or in magical work. The suites discussed the four things that were most relevant to most people at the time. They told us about our common concerns. The Swords discussed possible conflicts. The Wands revealed the nature of personal integrity. Cups discussed emotional concerns. Disks or Pentacles predicted the financial outcome. And then, a mystic looked at life, and at life as described by the Tarot.

From Astrology to Tarot to Jungian psychology, we can grasp our reality by relating to the elements: to air, fire, water, and earth. Air is thinking and communicating. Water is emotional caring and connecting. Fire is spirit, intuition and energy. Earth is doing, actions, and the rewards of doing; it is financial reality. To understand Tarot symbology, let's begin with the cup, the heart. We are all familiar with the stories of the heart told symbolically.

The Cup represents the heart or the womb. It holds the water of life, the blood, the heart's desire. The cup is the grail, the religious symbol sought by the Knights. It is the vehicle for the blood of life to be given as communion. When you look at a card, what are the characters doing with their cups/hearts? In an abstract deck, read the mood, color, and pattern. What do you feel when you look at the card? What can you tell about your heart by looking at the cup?

The Pentacle is life manifesting. It is work, money, time invested, and daily doings. When you look at a card, what are the characters doing with their disks/daily life? In an abstract deck, read the mood, color and pattern. What do you feel when you look at the card? What can you tell about physical manifestation by looking at the pentacle?

The Wand or Rod is the symbol of life blooming and growing from an unseen inner source. It is also the backbone, the spinal column that the Kundalini or essential energy travels as it moves through the chakras. The wand or rod tells the story of the essential or spiritual self. The suit of wands expresses the life's energy as it moves through these energy centers.

The Ace is the awakening of the life force in the base chakra. It is called being alive. Cards two to four discuss the awakening of sexual, creative energy. Four, five and six focus on power and empowerment. Seven is the expression of power through the heart, a literal translation of the word courage. Eight is the life force at the throat chakra and the process of allowing your truth to go out into the world. At nine, life force has filled the third eye center. Ten is our recognition of repression, of the way life force is confined as it lives in our bodies. We can dream so much more than we can do. The crown chakra is filled with creativity and life; this card show the initiate's burden, the challenge to do what we dream must be done. This is only one of the stories that the suite of wands tells.

The Sword...cutting, discerning, shaping reality with its point and its blade. This is the story of the mind and communication. The ability to pierce and puncture, to carve fine

shapes, to hone the truth; all of this is done with the mind's sharp edge and pointed words, thoughts and swords.

The circle of the cup's rim and of the pentacle, the piercing line of the rod and the sword; these symbols represent the feminine and masculine elements. Receiving and projecting, they speak of the alchemical meeting of opposites for a union of wholeness.

The Numbers **Simple Shapes - Self Definition**

One - A point. Single focused, absolute, unchallenged, newly born.

Two - A line of interaction and exchange. Duality, give and take, partnership, the relationship of an absolute, a point, to another absolute, another point.

Three - A triangle. The two create a third and complexity is born. The line now has dimension and form. Sociability, give and take is broadened into the possibility of loss and gain.

Four - A square. Stability, structure, form, solidness, power, fixity.

Transitional Shape

Five - A star. A point beyond four-square reality, which that demands that fixity become flexible and include it. Structure is challenged, change is initiated.

Complex Shapes **Fully Developed Shapes interact - Self Interacts with others**

Six - The balanced intersection of two triangles. Polarity seeks its opposite and finds wholeness. Self is defined and redefined by relationships with others.

Seven - The Triangle and the Square. Creativity is confined by stability. Creativity is born of stability. Stability is destroyed by creativity. Stability is enhanced by creativity. The shape won't work. How do you perceive it?

Eight - Two Squares. Two times four. Law becomes divine law. Stability becomes materialism or art. Order is enhanced by order to create a renaissance or a prison.

Nine - Three Triangles. This number and shape is completion. Wholeness, totality, finally finished.

Ten - Two Stars. An excess of wholeness. More than enough. The fullness that gives birth to a new cycle. Over the top, time to begin again. The two stars spinning in opposite directions. It is a dot, a point.

Numbers are a pulsation, not an evolution. From the development of self, we must go into the world. From our life in the world, we must return to ourselves. Over and over, we inhale and exhale. Each aspect of us may be at a different place in the complex pattern of our interactions.

These patterns are neither positive nor negative. The numbers do not tell a linear story. they do not indicate a progressive superiority; we do not get better and better until we no longer must continue with the process of life. Nor do they give us only one opportunity to claim their gifts and master their lessons. Over and over, we take Pure Insight - swords, Ecstasy - cups, Life force or creative energy - wands, Life - disks, being alive, and live them through their many possibilities and back to their essence again within our self. Insight, ecstasy, energy and being. These are the four aces.

Aces of the Minor Mysteries

The Minor Arcana discuss the Minor Mysteries of human life. Love and Sorrow, Worry, Wealth, Failure and Success. Peace and Strife. Virtue, Conflict and Courage. All the emotions, interactions, hopes, fears and material struggles of your daily living are the Minor Mysteries.

Look back on the last three months of your life. What suite has been most prevalent? Has your attention been on matters of the heart and relationships - romantic or plutonic? Has it been consumed with communication and verbal interactions of an intellectual nature? Has your focus been on material concerns and daily actions, or on the essential challenge of creative self-expression? Which suite describes your past?

Has the dynamic been self-discovery or cosmic awakening; have you been passionately consumed by an insight, creative impulse, emotion or physical reality? Is duality the theme, or creative expression, establishing stability, expanding that stability, finding the harmony and wholeness that is the union of opposites, creating divine form, or completion? Has a hyper-state of expanded and, perhaps, exaggerated reality been your experience?

If these are the Minor Mysteries, what are the Major Mysteries?

The Major Mysteries - The Archetypal Realm

The twenty two Major Arcana cards are portraits of the Archetypes. These archetypes do not belong to a deck of cards; they belong to you. You do not need to read a book to know them and how they both serve and manipulate your world. You only need to remember. Remember your dreams; remember your fairy tales. Look for them on television; they take roles in the dramas and on the commercials. They are the larger-than-life figures of Triumph that we project into the world, regardless of our time in history or our culture. From Triumph, they take the name Trump. When the Archetypes come into our life, they take the trick, even from our simple human royalty.

You already know a Fool. Remember a story where the unsolvable problem was solved by the one who knew and saw the simple truth, rather than the complexity that surrounded it. Remember when the hero was the one who had not yet learned the wisdom of society's pretenses. Remember personal or universal situations when great minds gathered to solve a great dilemma but could not. Then an innocent appeared and stated the obvious missed by the intellects. Think of the pleasure it gives us to recall that Einstein failed math. Genius. Fool.

When have you defied intellectual logic and stepped into pure possibility? When have you ignored what was smart, and taken a leap of faith that was definitely not motivated by practicality? You know the Fool.

You already know the Magician. He is the one who stands between all that is above and all that is earthly, with his magical tools before him. He calls life into form; the writer, the speaker, the one who uses the tools of life to change life. The Magician knows the connection of all things and can use that connection to create.

You know a Priestess. She is the mystical voice from beyond the veil; the deep uncorrupted intuition inside of you.

You know the Empress, the great mother, the force of nature. You know the Emperor, the great father and the order we seek through law. The Hierophant is the spiritual teacher. He is the presence of spiritual law in a material world.

You know the Major Mysteries. They are actors in a thousand stories; a thousand myths told in all cultures. The Priestess has taken the role of Isis; she has lived as Mary. She has lived in you. The Emperor has been Caesar, and he has been Jupiter. When you were a young child, he had his most dramatic role as your Father but, as you grew up, the Archetype returned to the Mysteries and your father, theoretically, became human. Your mother was the Empress when you were a babe in arms. These archetypal humans literally held the power of life and death. Their moods created the weather in your small world.

When we project an Archetype onto a mortal, we put that mortal into the realm of myth. We take away their mortality. Often we then treat them in a way we would not treat humans or our peers. When are you an Archetype in your community? If you read Tarot cards or an astrological chart, you will be seen by some as Magician/Witch. The way people react to you may be very different even though you know that you are still just yourself.

You know the Archetypes. When they come up in your Tarot spread, the archetypal realm is present in your life. These great Mysteries have stepped forward to interact in your story. They can appear with the random pull of a card in answer to your question or you can call them forth by deliberately choosing them, by invoking them or inviting them into your world.

The Archetypes and Myth

The Goddesses and Gods, the characters of myth and fiction, do not take on one Archetype only. They express a series of archetypal faces during their life story, just like you.

Mythic figures, just like you, can be summarized by one portrait - not even a larger-than-life mythic one. Psyche is the Fool, the innocent. She is the Lover. She is the Rebel, the Hanged One, the betrayer of a reality who dies and is resurrected. Eros is the Aeon, the Divine Child of Venus; he is the sexual principle of Lust. Zeus is the Emperor. Hera says that he also considered himself to be the Lovers far too often. Demeter is the Empress - the Great Mother, but I'll bet Persephone could add a few dimensions to her personality.

It is the nature of intimacy that the more you know about any individual or any story, the more complex and multifaceted it will become.

If you are not familiar with the stories of the Goddesses and the Gods, the Archetypes represent divine aspects, original patterns of being. These aspects and archetypes move into every culture. They dress as many Gods and Goddesses.

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More Tarot...this time as a pattern for dedication.

Oh...The Life of a Dedicant

By Cynthia Jones

- Revised from Mystery School 1999 -

Dedication is a commitment to create a relationship. Each year in Mystery School, we ask you to create a relationship with yourself, with an elemental - an aspect of worldly life, and to a Deity - an aspect of Divinity. Your dedication to yourself and to an aspect of Divinity are between you and your journal.

Although the Elements of life remain the same - Air, Fire, Water and Earth - the aspect or approach that we take to the element changes each year with the story. If our story were being told in a psychological voice, we would dedicate to Intellect (Air), Intuition (Fire), Emotion (Water), and Sensation (Earth). If it were astrologically based, we might dedicate to Communication (Air), Expression (Fire), Feeling and Psychic knowing (Water) and Action (Earth).

When the story was the Shaman and the Bones, the elements dressed themselves in primitive, Shamanic robes. They were Breath (Air), Blaze (Fire), Blood (Water) and Bone (Earth).

As folks new to Mystery School, I want you to know that I don't think that any one approach to the Elements is right while others are wrong. All perspectives are right. A metaphor, like a myth, is a truth dressed in story.

The elements give us a wonderful way to retell the stories of who we are and how the world is. It is the Elementals that we will *Call from the Corners of the Universe*. Dedications, at Mystery School, aren't offered as a religious or spiritual doctrine. They aren't a suggested approach to ceremonial magic. They are a way for us to deepen our relationships to ourselves, the world around us, and each other. They are one way that we play with each other and the story of the year.

In the past, we dedicated ourselves to ourselves in January. We dedicated ourselves to an Elemental in February and to an aspect of Divinity in March. This year's pattern will be created by the rhythm of the story as it unfolds.

The following will tell you a little about dedications in Mystery School. It will show how this pattern relates to the Tarot.

The Life of a Dedicant.

As you listen to Mysteries talk about Mystery School, you will hear *Dedication Questions*. "What Element are you going to dedicate to this year?" "What Deity?" You will hear casual gossip, "Why last year, when I did water...." "Did water...?" you might wonder; "How does someone 'do' water?" Well here is the Mystery within that Mystery.

*The monthly pattern below is from Mystery School 2000.
Dedications will follow a different monthly pattern this year.*

Dedications are a part of every Mystery School. In January, if you come to the Grove, you can flirt with an element. The February packet will invite you to get serious about your commitment to air, fire, water or earth. Wait till then, if you can.

Dedications...to yourself, an element and deity. March focuses on deities or archetypes, mythic qualities personified by goddesses and gods. Your dedication is a way to create a doorway into different realms. Once you have a doorway, you can open the door and step between the worlds. I would like to share with all of you how I see the role of the dedicant and how your dedications fit into the Mystery School process. Our process is mirrored in the story of becoming that is told by the Major Arcana of the tarot.

Dedicate. Dedicant. A dedicant makes a commitment to an on-going, conscious relationship. Like all relationships, the more involved you are, the deeper the relationship will be...a simple example of the Taoist nature of action and consequence. The only way to learn is to avail yourself of knowledge. That is the truth and the consequence. Our dedications are commitments to learn from three aspects of life and being: ourselves, the world we live in, and the mythic realm of archetypes and deities...forces and principles that transcend our local selves.

Tarot tells the story of self-development. The Fool, pure spirit, takes a journey into being, into becoming. Mystery School is a year of conscious, intentional self-creation. Your dedications are tools for our intentional, creative work. They, like the myth, are the paradigm we play in. Just consider the Fool to be your signicator as the following 21 cards tell your story, the story of becoming as told by the Tarot. There are three lines of seven cards.

The first seven cards are devoted to self-development - the development of a self. The first commitment for "becoming" is our commitment to ourselves. To discover our growing edge and to dance upon it, we must be dedicated to ourselves. We must make ourselves available to ourselves for knowledge. What did you want for yourself when you began Mystery School? What aspect of yourself is hungry to grow, and are you feeding that aspect of yourself? Do you have a vision of who you can be and are you dedicated to that image of yourself and your possibility? Your dedication to your self lets you check in with yourself. You are the person you are accountable to, for the work of the year. This dedication ritualizes this truth and your commitment to yourself.

The second seven cards are about our relationship with all other living beings and earthly life. Here we explore the challenges of relating, of our newly developed self interacting with others, with forces outside of ourselves and beyond our own creation. We discover our inner truths and balance them with the shared experiences that form communal reality. In these seven cards we interact with each other and with worldly issues of justice, wisdom, the change of seasons and the cycles of fate, sex and power, and surrendering that power for deeper knowledge, the end of form (death) and beginning again (rebirth). This is the realm of earthly actions, of living in a world with others. It is also the psychological realm.

In this realm, we dedicate to an elemental spirit or force. We dedicate to an earthly element with a psychological. Although we dedicate to the conscious life force in the element, I am not asking any of you to believe in a conscious life force in the fire, earth, air or water. But when we act as if we do, we act differently. In Mystery School, all we

ask is that you step into this belief for the time you are here. Join us in this reality and see whether it enriches you. For the sake of our work together, play with it for a year.

There was a time when many spiritual philosophies didn't consider animals to have a soul. They weren't "conscious life" so it was fine to use them in any way we wanted. There was a time when many spiritual philosophies saw no conscious life in people with a different shade of skin, in women, in un-baptized babies...and so it was fine to use them in anyway we wanted. When we see the earth as not only alive but conscious - we walk with more awareness. We are changed - the earth is the same.

Another way to step into the elements is through the doorway of metaphysics and Jungian psychology. The elementals work with the four aspects of being. Our human processes of thinking and breathing, energy, feeling and flowing, and doing are represented by air, fire, water and earth. We are all always all...but which one will you focus on for a year to deepen your relationship with the world?

Where Mystery School differs from many metaphysical studies is that I ask you to learn about yourself by attending to the element rather than just using it as a code or key for the personal or seasonal equivalent. What can you learn about energy by watching fire? What can you learn about emotions by noticing the changing nature of water? Why did these elements become representative of these aspects of being anyway? By entering a relationship with the element, we can learn about earth, life and ourselves instead of just about ourselves.

The third seven cards of the Major Arcana take us beyond our relationship with all of the wonders of being alive, having a body and sharing a world. They take us into the realm of the sky. To get there, we face the devil - and then...the lightning bolt, the star, the moon, the sun; the call to enter the celestial realm of the Archetypes and the Universe is ours. Beyond self and earth, there is a realm that belongs to the Goddesses and Gods. or...the Archetypes. This realm is all that we see overhead, wonder about, reach for...but will never really know, except in our stories and myths, in our dreams and philosophies.

We humans have created relationships with the Mysteries since time began. We take a Mystery and personify it...Life, Death, Love, Hunger and Being Fed. Wind, thunder, great storms of the sky and soul. The great nurturer we call Isis, Mary, Demeter, the Empress of the Tarot. The Destroyer - he too has many names. Different cultures - different stories. The magic of greening and growth - the Green God - Persephone. Sexual energy, force, and magic - Pan, Venus, certain aspects of Zeus. Not the story - but the quality. That is the heart of the dedication to a Deity. What aspect of the eternal do you want to grow toward this year?

Polytheism takes the Divine and addresses it in aspects. Aspects of Divinity are personified because it is easier for us humans to capture them and relate to them when we think about them this way. We can begin to understand the force of life when we describe it in human terms and tell great stories filled with timeless truths about them. When we create a myth, we can step into the mythic.

So dedicate yourself to an aspect of Divinity, a Deity that personifies a quality that is larger than your local self and more heroic than your mortal self. This personification

may be able to fly, or shape-shift, or speak the language of the birds. As you create your relationship with a Deity, our co-created mythology will become richer.

Mystery School is about consciously creating yourself, the self you choose to be. Your dedications are tools. As you play with these concepts in a group, they take on dimension. By using them, you enter a mythic realm where your imagination can move you into a state of heightened creativity, and a deeper understanding of yourself and the world you share. We ask you to join us in the play as we play with beliefs, but I don't ask you to believe anything that we play with except this....

Only by being involved can you have the gift of involvement.

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Entering the Realm of the Archetypes

by Cynthia Jones

- From the first Mystery School in 1995 -

No one can step fully into Magical work without questioning the nature of Reality. (This article is also in Myth, Magic and Community. Look in the Magic section of the booklet.)

Magic: to co-create reality with the Goddesses and Gods, with the elemental nature spirits, and with other mythical beings. Magic: to co-create reality with the archetypes.

The Archetypal Realm

At the edge of our perceptions we glimpse a world beyond our world: the place where myths are made, where improbable dreamers dream impossible dreams into being. The archetypal realm, an Olympus of consciousness, is inhabited by Goddesses and Gods, the Elementals, and the Sisters of Fate. This is the place where the spirits of fire, water, earth and air live, now that they are considered fiction rather than myth.

Magic - to co-create reality with the archetypes. How do we reach them? How do we find the great patterns of possibility personified in every culture? Archetypal is defined as the original pattern. One of the pure ideas or realities of which all existence is an imitation. The pre-existent form for all things. The essence.

The archetypal realm is the place of all imaginings that precede actuality. It is the place of dreams, a realm we visit nightly in our sleep. It is the homeland of the muses, those archetypes of musical or artistic inspiration who seek out artists and fill them with vision and genius.

The archetypal realm is the home of the great characters of immortal literature. It is where they come from, and where they return to when their day is done and they want to rest. Then they change costume and persona and enter another century through the mind of another writer.

The archetypal realm is where the Priestess, Priest, Hierophant and Shaman have gone in centuries past to meet the deities and discover the pattern of the hunt or the purpose of life. Entering this realm began when there was no doubt this realm existed. In those times, belief in the deities and the realm of magic was not questioned. The realm of the archetypes was as accepted as the change of the seasons. Belief in the Goddesses and the Gods was and is a prerequisite to dancing with them.

The shaman created a place Between the Worlds, a place not of our mundane world but not of the world of forces and patterns either. She created a place where the two could meet. Between the Worlds, we create a place to re-connect with the original essences of all that is, and capture the magic of all that can be. The root of the word religion is relinking. The place Between the Worlds is where we relink with the archetypes.

When we enter this realm, we transcend the ordinary, real world and step into a world with an entirely different set of possibilities. We step into a world governed by an entirely different set of laws. In the realm of the archetypes, the place Between the Worlds, we

can weave our future with the Sisters of Fate, direct the winds and rains by dancing with the elementals, and spin the great spiral of time forward to create the future and backward to recreate the past.

Priestess, magician, witch or healer: one who can create the space Between the Worlds and call the archetypes in to join them. Shaman, medicine person, miracle worker: one who unlocks the door to this mythic place where mortal and magic meet. Realities merge and the unreal becomes real, the impossible becomes possible.

When we can bring the realities of the archetypal world into the mundane world, it is called a miracle by some and transformation by others. It is called magic. Magic: to co-create reality with the archetypal beings and the forces of nature.

Ritual is one path to this space. Our ritual work or trance can open within us the place where these worlds can meet.

The key that opens the door to the archetypal realm is made with material natural to that realm, rather than forged with the material found in our mundane world. The key is made of imagination shaped by desire and given form by belief. No imaginal form comes into being without being charged with intention. Casual prayers do not get the attention of the Goddesses and Gods. Passionate desire can rearrange the patterns of the clouds. Desire and vivid imagination have - and will - shape both personal and collective reality.

Imagine. Pretend. Build the imaginal realm so completely that it comes into a life of its own. Pretend and imagine with greater and greater detail and sensual completeness until you transcend physical reality and find yourself in the rich world of the archetypes. Reality is made by cosmic mimes, who convince others to share their imaginings until they manifest as fact. Time, money, and the preferences of God are among the most obvious of these agreements in our society.

The archetypal realm, ever present yet inaccessible, is visited in an incredible dream that fades just before we awaken. How do we get there?

Go to the edge, the very edge of your perceptions. Open the door. Step through. Let your consciousness expand until the edges of reality are stretched. The edges of reality become thin. What is absolute and dense becomes thin and then thinner. Translucent. Light from some unearthly source begins to permeate reality, changing the color and quality of all limitations. Expanding more, thinner still, the boundary of reality becomes so transparent that it is almost invisible.

Expanding more, thinner still, the membrane between realities becomes porous as if it is made up of 100,000 windows. Expanding more, thinner still, the windows enlarge and become doors. Open the door and step into the realm of the archetypes.

You enter the realm of the archetypes. Mythic forces, deities, and elementals are present. The great and timeless patterns of possibilities are present. Art, music, and the stories told and retold in every culture are present. Myths - those great biographies of everyone and no one - are present.

Once you open the door to this realm and step through the threshold, this place will always haunt you. The archetypes may call upon you in your dreams or be waiting for you around the next corner like their human impersonators on All Hallow's Eve.

When the two realities meet, would you expect their impact to be less than the meeting of hot and cold air masses? Great storms and hurricanes; whirlwinds of the soul occur. Seduced by the muses, caught in a vision that transcends the possible, you are a dreamer. To bring possibility back into our world and plant it in the soil of earthly reality, roots intact and capable of growing, is mythic. Priestess. Priest. Magician. Shaman. Witch.

As a Priestess, if you choose to claim the key and unlock the door between the worlds, your first task is to learn the laws of earthly reality. Learn the laws, boundaries, limits, and needs of your body and the world of mortals. Once you have entered the archetypal realm, your knowledge of your physical reality will let you find the door back to your world from the archetypal side. Your skill and mastery of the world in which you live will enable you to bring the magic back and have it take shape in our reality.

Madness? Inspired? Some traditions refer to opening this door as responding to "The Call."

"The Call" - an experience that occurs when the Transcendent interrupts our surface life and imposes the story of the Soul on our autobiographies. As most of us know, a *call* from the Transcendent can be terrifying to the ego; it can exact overwhelming sacrifices and present seemingly impossible challenges, requiring that awesome changes be made in our life. In certain situations, a *Call* culminates in physical death. But always, it means the death of what we knew our life to be prior to the Call.

The Call

"The Call is the most direct way we encounter the Transpersonal. Whether it comes as a voice, the appearance of an angel, synchronistic events, a vision, a serious accident or illness, a dream that is rudely awakening, signs and/or omens, or a direct realization, no one who has ever weathered any of these life-altering rectifications - and also has some insight into the source of the experience - can ever again deny that the Transcendent exists. Both the individual and the collective connected to that individual are irrevocably transformed. The encounter haunts for a lifetime - and particularly when one doesn't, for whatever reason, respond."

Brugh Joy

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Living Mythology and the Four Levels of Reality

by Cynthia Jones

Mystery School 1995 - Revised 1997

If anything that I have written has been prophetic, this is it. Even knowing that intense Magical and personal work will invoke our larger-than-life perceptions of reality...always, I am repeatedly surprised by the unstoppable force of personal mythology in magical space. Since the first Reclaiming Summer Intensive at Diana's Grove in 1994, every week-long event has given me an opportunity to ride the waves of emotion through the four levels of reality.

Living Mythology

Since the first year of our Mystery School, I have become highly aware of the importance of being able to identify the worlds of reality and the different truths contained in each world. Working with the four worlds of reality has become a key part of our Mystery School. We consider it an essential skill for Priestessing for anyone who offers magical work and takes participants from their place in the physical, mundane world into the realm of their greater story, their myth.

In my own family dynamic, in emotionally charged situations, in my own experiences of emotional distress, pain and fear; I have observed four independent and interdependent realms of reality. I continually strive to understand what is happening at each level.

In 1994 we took an exercise that we learned from Jean Houston and developed it into a Mystery School weekend on creating personal mythology. That weekend changed my perspective of reality, truth, magical work and Priestessing. It has increased my understanding of others and has enabled me to respect the personal nature of truth. Before stepping into this work, I assumed we lived in the world of physical reality, discussed the psychological reality with our therapist, entered the mythic level during a magical week or at Mystery School, and discovered the essence when we were willing to explore the depth of our own reactions and assumptions.

Since that time, I have discovered that we live in a mythic world. We occasionally visit the physical world to attend to some physical details and gather information. Like a bird building her nest, we then take the physical experience back to the mythic level and use it to reinforce our story or myth of reality. We use it to build our personal mythology. As we bring different and divergent myths to the same physical situation, we are often confused and in disagreement about what has happened or what is happening. It is difficult to share a world, when we are so rarely in the same world.

Life is experienced in four realms. We share our experiences by blending the four simultaneous experiences of reality together. They are Physical, Emotional/ Psychological, Mythic, and Essential.

The Four Levels of Reality

Physical Reality - In this level we attend to events, people and life in terms of what *is* and *what happens*, only. Events, people and actions are seen without the coloring of emotion and the shading of motive, intention or interpretation. In this realm, we attend to what is said or done rather than what is meant or intended.

The Physical Level of Reality, devoid of psychological insights and psychic knowings, is often underrated and overlooked in our sophisticated world. Rather than being superficial or without insight, this level allows us to function successfully regarding issues of physical safety and appropriate action. It is objective rather than subjective. Our focus is only on physicality: what are people doing, what exactly was said, what are the physical conditions? Here, we see the world without interpretation. We hear a conversation without listening for implications, motivation or motive. Attending to the physical level of reality enables us to gather information and notice more and more physical detail.

When Priestessing a group, you are responsible for physical safety. When you are responsible for physical safety, you must know what is happening in the physical world. Being present in this world requires as much training and skill as being attentive on the other levels. Attention to physical details creates a physically safe environment. Even when physical safety is provided, individuals may not feel safe. They may hold onto their myths of danger.

Is there danger in this situation or is there fear? Both are true concerns but they require different solutions. Attention to the physical reality is essential to understanding the physical truth of any situation.

Example: We found 2 puppies by the road side at 10:00 at night. By the time we got back to the place where we saw them, they had disappeared into the underbrush. One barked as I approached and wagged his tail. The other remained very silent. We found it by searching with a flashlight. They were about 6 weeks old.

Far from being superficial, heightened awareness and attention to the details are the doorway to the psychological world.

Psychological World - This is the reality of emotions, motivations and motives, intentions, and the deep mysterious compelling forces of feelings and reactions to feelings. In this world, personal history, culture and our feelings shape our perception.

When we enter the psychological realm, we give meaning to the expressions, gestures, body language and actions of others, based on our own experience and understanding of interactions. To be skilled at accurately understanding others, we need to be highly attuned to our own feelings and very open to input from others about our perceptions.

Our insights and interpretations may add depth and help us to accurately describe a situation or they may lead us away from the individuals we are interacting with and into our own past and similar situations with others. Our interpretation and reaction may or may not be relevant to the current physical happening. Psychological truth about another will become more and more accurate if you refine your sensitivity by asking for feedback.

When you observe a frown on the Physical Level, it might mean that the person with a frown is angry with you, or it might mean that their shoe is irritating a sore toe. Are you describing the emotion of another...or your fears about how they may be feeling about you?

Skill on this level requires you to develop the ability to distinguish your feelings and reactions from the feelings of others. Is the pain, anger, love or joy you perceive *yours*? Is it how *you* would react, or is it the feeling you are observing in another? Is the anger, hostility or displeasure that you “perceive” in another the truth about their emotional state, or is it a statement about you, your insecurity or fear? When do you project your summations onto another and assume it is a psychological truth?

To become skilled in this world of reality, ask. Confirm your perceptions. If you hear that you are mistaken, share what you have observed and ask for more information. Assuming that you know more about what someone else is feeling than they do blocks your ability to learn about any perspective but your own.

On the Psychological Level, we add our understanding and perceptions of emotions to the physical actions and interactions. Feelings, intentions, motivations and underlying desires form this reality.

Example: The puppies were frightened. Crouching in the underbrush, one baby attempted to tell me how fierce he was while his tail said, ‘I’m friendly, don’t kill me.’ The other hoped to escape danger by remaining as silent as a rabbit, disappearing into the leaves and the night.

This internal and subjective realm opens the door to the mythic realm.

Mythic Level - In this realm of reality, we retell the Physical story as if our Psychological perceptions were physical fact. The story is externalized. A new version of what is and what happened materializes.

In the mythic world an event or interaction becomes a story. The story is filled with meaning and symbolism. Physical events are reshaped by emotional experience. The story now tells not only what happened but what it felt like, and how it impacted us. These additions give greater truth and more depth to an interaction.

In this world our personal history, now freed from the confines of time, retells itself as physical reality. Other people in our mythic stories are attributed with motives, intentions and feelings that we have experienced with others who have taken similar parts in our great stories. Ten highly skilled observers would all have the same description of an event in physical reality, but different mythic stories about what happened.

Right action and *evil doing* exist here. Our myths are so deeply integrated that it is an affront to our perceptions to call them “Myth.” You may find yourself defending your mythic reality against the perceptions of others. Your deepest truths may be challenged by those who just don't know what really happened.

We group together to reinforce our mythic realities: “Yes, that individual or type of person is dangerous.” or “Yes, this type of religious celebration is the most spiritual.” Groups gather in agreement to affirm the nature and intention of God or of the Goddess. When an association with those of like mind is needed to reinforce a belief or

perception, you are in the mythic world. If a group is needed to co-create a reality, it is mythic. Physical reality does not require affirmation. Groups do not gather to affirm the color of the grass or their belief in the progression of the seasons.

We intentionally enter the mythic world through magical, symbolic or ritual work. Trance work enables us to create new myths and, therefore, new foundations for our emotional realities. Our unconscious myths keep us in endlessly repeating, often painful, patterns. Our cultural myths have enabled us to perpetrate atrocities toward those we mythologized into sub-human or super-human beings. By intentionally choosing empowering myths, we can heal ourselves at deeply internal levels.

When other people lack human frailty and vulnerability - when they become heroes or demons, arch villains or saviors - you can be sure that you are in the mythic level of reality. When you perceive yourself as hero or demon, arch villain or savior, you can be sure that you are in the mythic level of reality. There is no need for compassion for those that have been cast in mythic roles. We can criticize our leaders and battle our foes without the reservations we have for other humans. We expect those we mythologize to follow a code of conduct that we would not apply to our friends or ourselves. The characters in our myths are also free from that human trait of change.

A myth is a story that we tell and retell. Jean Houston defines classical mythology as a story that may have never happened but is always happening. Rich and larger than fact, bordered and contained by an occasionally intruding physical reality, this is where we live much of our lives. A skilled therapist - or priestess - can distinguish myth from physical events and work equally with both.

Example: The abandoned puppies hid in the woods, cold and frightened. The more aggressive one attempted to defend himself and his sibling from the dangers of the night with his tiny bark and courageous actions. The almost full moon made this night a fine night for hunting. Fate stalked the tiny siblings.

This world gives us the doorway that allows us to step into the essence.

Essential Level - Reach beneath the story. What is beneath its meaning? What is the foundation that supports a lifetime of perspective? To truly understand any reality, we need to discover the essence of an experience. We need to discover our essential beliefs about the world, ourselves and other people. To understand our perception of an interaction. Essence is the place before interpretation, personal relevance, judgment, and fact. The essence can be a quality. The essence of the example above is vulnerability. This quality shapes the myth, creates the emotion and, often, the emotional interpretation. It generates the motivation. If the story were an excerpt from a science fiction novel entitled *Puppies from Hell*, the essence might be Power. The myth would be entirely different. The same behavior could describe the cunning puppies attempting to lure a poor unsuspecting human into the woods with calculated puppy acts. Ludicrous as this may sound, when we create myths from a place of fear or powerlessness, we often tell such stories as fact.

The essence can be a deeply integrated belief. It can be a feeling. Reaching the essential realm of reality will give us a deep understanding of ourselves and our stories. It is the place of essential change. If we are willing to step into our own stories as a

healer or a witch, with the intention to change consciousness, the power of transformation lives in this world.

Magic and the Four Levels of Reality

The four levels give us the opportunity to work as a shape-shifter in our own lives. When we step fully into physical reality, and then understand our own feelings and emotional experiences, and then discover the greater story, we can discover the essence of the story that we tell about ourselves, others and situations.

If we choose to consciously select an essence for the re-telling of a story, we can change the myth. If we change the essence of a story from powerlessness to empowerment, the reality will shape shift on the mythic and psychological levels. The physical will remain the same but our reaction to it will be different.

Each level of reality is true.

Each level is true...but each level isn't the physical truth.

Learning to look at each level will give us a way to understand "truth." All levels are true but they are not all physically true. All levels of reality aren't literally true or objectivity true. Yet, feelings and perceptions are valid even when they aren't facts. This work will ask each of us to work with an issue on the level of reality where it exists. We cannot heal emotional fear by attending to physical reality, if there is no physical danger present. As Priestesses or counselors, we need to develop skills in seeing the four levels. We need to know that each one is valid. We need to be able to distinguish each reality and its unique set of needs.

If we don't understand the four realms of reality, we might address feelings of being unsafe by making more and more physical restrictions to assure physical safety. When we do this, we never create a feeling of safety, nor do we address the fear-invoking myths that were built on an essence of vulnerability and powerlessness. We can't address the perception of who or what is dangerous. If the issue is fear of fire, is that because dry grass is surrounding the fire circle and no water is available, or is that because the individual is afraid of fire?

Magical work and work with magic will always bring us into our mythic reality. As a Priestess, you open this door. It is good to know the world you are taking others into.

The emotional or psychological reality is amplified in this space. Therefore, the mythic realm is a rich place for both emotional and spiritual healing. It is a rich and powerful place for personal growth and transformation. It is highly charged. Larger-than-life beings, both heroines and demons, live in this world. They dwell in the psyche of those who enter this realm and they will also dress as others in a magical community. If you are going to serve as Priestess, be prepared to be mythologized.

If you facilitate the creation of a new story, healing can happen on all four levels, in all four worlds. The characters will shape-shift with each visit. The physical reality will remain the same, "David is standing in the corner." 'David' may change from a dangerous invader into another person. He might become someone who is driven by his

own insecurities and desire to belong. He might become someone who is trying to understand how to interact in a different social arena.

Just as the emotional reality is amplified in the mythic world, it is diminished in the physical world. Being fully present in the physical world is being **grounded**.

Working in Mythic Reality

When we create a magical experience with symbolic language, ritual, trance, Tarot, or spiritual symbolism, we deliberately invoke a mythic space. In creating a place where a new myth can flourish, old myths can also seize our experience.

I would like to look at the levels of reality in the context of magical work or ritual work. I have noticed that when magical work is brief and surrounded by familiar and demanding physical realities, we don't get consumed by a newly invoked mythic experience. An evening ritual - with a clear entrance and exit to the trance state, followed by a trip home and the demands of daily life - will not have the same effect as a week-long intensive, regardless of how powerful the ritual may be.

In events such as a Reclaiming camp or a festival, a week or weekend between the worlds, the border of physical reality is removed from mythic space. The psychological is amplified, and is not diminished by the interaction with the physical world that is offered to us by the distraction of daily responsibilities. The deep mythic level opens to receive us fully. With all this richness comes the possibility that it may become difficult to distinguish the mythic world from physical reality. Absorption in the mythic story causes chaos in the soul. As Priestesses, our challenge is to make clear distinctions in the realms of experience, both personally and in our work with others.

Being fully cognitive of the facts and events in physical reality is being grounded. When we are grounded, we can identify and respond to physical dangers, create safe space, and take appropriate actions in the realm of events and happenings. Being grounded allows us to separate feelings from facts, myth from actual events. It enables us to take action based on physical rather than mythic reality.

Being grounded requires eating, sleeping, breathing, sharing perspective with others, and getting out of your head and inner dialogue.

Being grounded requires us to attend to the physical world rather than just touching the earth or putting down imaginal roots. Grounding returns us to the physical world.

When we are grounded, we can distinguish the seductive voice of the mythic story teller in our soul, who offers us larger-than-life stories filled with truths that transcend the duller details of actual events. The myth captures a richer truth. It embodies what a situation was like for us emotionally and in the context of our history. Each deepening of the story takes us further away from physical facts. The price of this richness can be that, in the telling of the story, others become powerful beings.

These Beings may be allies, leaders or great loves; they may be foes, monsters and demons. Afterward, we are left to share our world with dangerous beings of mythic proportions. Whether they are positive or negative, they are not merely human. Grounding lets us own the myth and the Beings of the myth as our own creations. When

we realize that we have mythologized someone, we can “remove the spell” and allow them to return to the world of humans. They will no longer be awesomely wondrous or demonic. The people we share our world with will live independent of our stories about them.

As Priestesses, we move *between the worlds*, between the worlds of reality. As Magicians, Witches or Healers who change consciousness, we need to understand the reality in each world. We need to know where healing is required, and create a myth that allows us to be empowered and whole, rather than frightened and diminished in our story of ourselves.

At a festival in 1994 a man became so deeply involved in his myth of power and his sense of being archetypal that he stepped into the fire and was seriously burned. His friends witnessed his actions and did nothing to prevent his injury. They were caught in his myth and did not want to interfere with his sense of magic and power. The danger is not in the myth, but in not differentiating the myth from physical reality. Whether literally - as in this case - or psychologically - as is far more common - it is easy to get burned when myth is accepted as physical reality.

In distinguishing the levels of reality, a Priestess can clearly see the physical danger of walking into a fire; validate the feeling that one can walk into a fire; and explore the myth as a deeper story rather than as a physical reality. The myth is a rich symbolic story containing truths that are greater than fact. When this story is lived as fact, rather than myth, it is pathological.

Whether the myth has the essence of power - the great master of fire - or the essence of powerlessness - the doomed moth drawn into the flame - a Priestess has to be able to distinguish the realities. She validates physical reality, feelings and myth; all true in their respective realms but not necessarily interchangeable. With this clarity we can have a very powerful and insightful experience without getting burned.

If fire and myth are dangerous, should we avoid any possible interaction with them and advise others to do the same? Should we eliminate fire of all kinds: physically in the center of the circle, and the emotional possibility of any situation that could get heated and create psychological burns, *and* the opportunity to explore our own rich myths where history, metaphor and emotion blend to reveal to us our deeper stories? I don't think so. Acquiring skills to distinguish levels of reality would be preferable to a world without the danger and illumination of fire.

The mythic world is rich and succulent, filled with the juice of emotion essential to magic, understanding and transformation. As Priestesses, as healers or healthy people, our work is to use all of the richness of the myth while maintaining a full awareness of the physical world as well.

An individual may be so filled with the archetypal richness and power of the Goddess of the Bel Fires that she knows fire is her creation and her child; she can hold it in her hands and give birth to the stars. In the physical world, the skin will burn and scar. Psychologically, awakening to the force of creation is real. Mythically, Thou art Goddess. The essence is power.

With years of discipline and work, this person might be able to handle fire, or creative energy, or passion, or the ability to generate transformation. Living this myth literally, physically, would be damaging and crazy-making. It would cause paradise to disappear. As for Psyche, after paradise disappears, the reconstruction of it often comes through a series of tasks and challenges. When the myth is *my myth*, it is not so easy for me to see the distinct and different truths.

Let me explore with you a myth that held me in its grip. I would like to look at an issue that was discussed at the December 1994 Mystery School weekend, on all four levels of reality: personal safety at Diana's Grove or during a Reclaiming camp.

Physically, Diana's Grove is a remote piece of land. Our events are only open to people who arrange to come and pay in advance. We are difficult to find without a map and closed to casual visitors. Considering the size of many festivals and gatherings, our groups are small. A stranger is noticeable.

During an event, our shop has no doors. *[No longer true!]* Our doors have no locks. We leave our cash and merchandise in the open without fear of theft and nothing has been stolen. Campers use our phone unsupervised. With an honor system, we have had no unpaid phone calls. Thought and planning go into every aspect of an event here: personal safety, medical care, even pest control.

But when we enter the mythic, the psychological is amplified. When we live in the mythic for a week, without the intrusion of daily life responsibilities - our natural way to ground - myth can become almost epic. It will become "fact." Intensity + imagination = reality.

Regarding personal safety, in physical reality there is safety in the public nature of a campground. Neighboring tents are close by. Conversations and intimate moments are easily overheard. Each individual is surrounded by a caring, involved community. The ability to call for help is all we need to summon others to our assistance. The evening news will verify that you are safer in our campground than you are in the security of your city home...but not safe from your awareness of vulnerability and your own myth.

When we move out of our familiar environments with all of the comforts we associate with safety - familiar foods, walls, and distance from the presence of nature with her winds, rain, and spiders - we feel vulnerable. We then become very susceptible to myths generated by the essence of powerlessness and fear.

Physical reality dissolves and mythic reality consumes us for a week. Therein lies the magic and the "danger" that is present at our intensives. Angry confrontations and hurt feelings become life-threatening. Our vulnerability calls forth dangers in the dark night.

We cannot remove all possibilities of danger, unless we create a bug-free, animal-free environment with the behavior of all the participants closely controlled and regulated...but in truth a prison is not the safest of all environments.

The sources of mythic dangers at camp are men, women, feminists, our dog Skippy, wildlife, weather, water, spiders, ticks and, of course, poisonous snakes. I deeply understand the power of fear, as my myth is that Diana's Grove will be destroyed if people consider it an unsafe place. My personal history is activated. My myth grows. It

eclipses the physical reality expressed in a stack of evaluations just an arm's reach from where I sit. When I return to the physical realm, I can pick up these evaluations that talk of the magic and comfort experienced here.

When fear is within us, no amount of security will ever make us feel safe. Only facing, feeling and healing our fears allow us to do that. Camp, by creating the possibility for this essential healing, risks being labeled dangerous.

Rather than create a prison, we give great and thoughtful consideration to all aspects of personal and psychological safety. We trust each individual to act in her or his own behalf and use the resources we provide: a trained and caring staff, assistance in filling individual needs, and a belief that each individual can and will act in her or his own behalf.

When the essence is powerlessness, frightening myths also define world politics. Xenophobia, our immigration policy, and endless war are justified by these myths.

As Priestesses (and Mysteries), we are challenged to build our myth on the essence of our choice. I believe that world peace, as well as personal peace, is dependent on this magic. The most common definition of magic is the art of changing consciousness at will.

The creation of a personal myth that enables us to be healers, magicians, priestesses and witches is a step into the mysteries. We ask that you move between the worlds - physical, emotional, mythic and essential - and use your consciousness at will to design myths of empowerment.

As Priestess, we ask that you live as if you have a myth rather than as if a myth has you. This alone is ample work for a year at Mystery School, and a key to healing many limiting and disempowering patterns.

The essence of empowerment allows us to be free from being either defender/conqueror or victim. It lets us see and treat others as empowered individuals, who are free to create their own solutions and the struggles that they need in order to relive their own deeper stories or myths.

A Priestess, then, is not one who protects others from the dangers of discomfort, both physical and mythical. Being a Priestess does not mean that we manipulate the world to assure that our circle or coven-mates won't experience fear or conflict. It means we work to distinguish each world of reality and respond appropriately.

As Priestesses, we work to be grounded enough to recognize physical reality, take action in response to physical dangers, validate feelings without confusing them with physical realities that do not exist, and explore the mythic as a deep story containing keys to the past and future.

A Priestess is an invocator of images that heal. She can steward those who choose to transform reality, by assisting them in redefining their essence and creating a new myth. A new myth allows us to experience a more empowering psychological reality. We can then act differently in the physical world. Through our actions, we can change physical reality.

When I reconnect with the essence of love and magic that created Diana's Grove, I no longer fear that we will be destroyed by myths of danger. The fire becomes a source of warmth, light and magic where people dance on a summer's night. The army of caretakers needed to prevent possible burns awakens to the rarity of such a situation. Reality begins to impact the mythic, the mythic touches the emotional. We breathe in and notice where we really are.

Stepping out of Myth

If you are captured in a painful or disempowering myth, or if you are Priestessing someone who is consumed by a mythic perspective and wants to reclaim their own power, the following are the steps to de-mythify a person or situation. The key to stepping out of a myth is to take it from the internal realm of sacred reality and allow your story to be impacted by other perspectives and physical reality.

Physical Reality: First, focus on physical reality. What exactly is happening or has happened?. Look at and tell events only. Let all of your interpretations and psychological insights go to the emotional/psychological realm. Notice where you have perceived motives and motivations and take them from the physical description and place them in the psychological realm. Look at what has happened physically, only.

If you are working with a person who has been mythologized as heroine or demon, look at the person in physical form. Sit face to face and see the human who lives under the myth and in physical form. They will often look different than they did in your mind.

Then look at yourself in this situation. See yourself physically. Notice your size, your physical abilities, and the actions that you can and do take. Are you different from the You that you were in your mind?

Emotional and Psychological Reality: What are you feeling? First explore your own emotional reality and then externalize it. Talk about your feelings.

What are the psychological facts and truths that you have been holding about the other person or the situation? If you are working with a person, share your perceptions. Be open to hearing the psychological reality of the other. Allow the additional information to impact your reality.

If you are working with a situation, share your psychological perspectives. Listen to the perspective of others. Talk directly with other people who were present. Gather information intentionally from others whose interpretation or reaction is different from yours. Listen to those with a different perspective.

Mythic: Tell your story of what happened. Tell it again as a myth. Identify the villains, demons, heroes and heroines. Discuss what you get by keeping this myth. Does it free you from responsibility? Does it let you blame or scapegoat another? To blame without caring is to scapegoat. To care is to have a relationship, an exchange, a conversation, or to engage in actions that heal. Once we create a scapegoat or devil, we not only have a demon to blame; we also have a demon to fear. Once we have a heroine or savior, we have created a being who will take care of us, but we also have a leader who

has power over us. In both cases, we have just sacrificed a human to the realm of Mythic reality. We have stripped them of their humanness.

Once we are willing and able to look at our myth as our myth, we can then own the story. Once a myth is ours, we can recreate it and retell it. Myth-making leads us to and begins with the essential realm.

Essential: What is the essence of the myth that you want to change or heal? What is the essential quality, perception or belief that has shaped the story? Once you know the essence of the myth that you want to heal, choose an essence that empowers you. Let the new essence rewrite the story. What is the new story? If the new essence were to shape your personal history and your experience of the world and others, who would you be? Who would the other people in your life and story be? Allow the essence to reshape reality.

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Cornerstones of Community

by Cynthia Jones

- Mystery School 1999 -

This packet opened Mystery School in January 1999; the story: Persephone. This beginning gave us a foundation for our community. In times of confusion and disharmony, the key to the difficulties in inter-personal relationships is that one of these cornerstone is "out of place." This tool let's me know when I am off, when my own issues have created a situation where I am not on "solid ground" in my perception of others. Each year we learn a little more about how to use the Cornerstones as a community.

Cornerstones of Community

I am looking at the concepts that I want to discuss in the January Packet and I don't know how to begin. Choice, Thinking Well of the Group and Thinking Well of Yourself, Stewardship of Self, The Sacred Wound that Begins Life - all of this to explore and stir together in the cauldron that begins Mystery School.

These concepts...help me place them in the broth that bubbles in the Great Cauldron. Then add your personal intentions, your personality, your dreams and your remembrances of who you can become. From the union of these ideas and who you want to be, this packet will conclude with the conception of a self; self-concept. Let these ideas touch your personal story, for our work this year is not to tell our story - our personal myth - but create it anew. And to create it with these ingredients added to the wonder of who we are: Choice, Thinking Well of the Group, Thinking Well of Yourself, Stewardship of Self, and the Sacred Wound that Begins Life.

We aren't starting with these concepts because I think they are a great beginning philosophy, one that will be easily embraced by our willing spirits. These ideas may be controversial. You might not like them. They may challenge your way of looking at the world and yourself. That is why we are beginning with them. Consider them to be gifts from Persephone, the Goddess whose touch changes by awakening growth. If you let these ideas touch you, they will change you. They will change your relationships. They will change our community. They can provide us with a foundation on which we can build a community.

These concepts are cornerstones. And, as in the construction a building, when the foundation is solid and intentionally laid, it will support amazing height and weight. If the foundation is weak, the building will require constant repair. Little adjustments here and there; the roof always leaks, the windows require effort to open and close. And so...the cornerstones.

If we were going to enter a year-long project of building a cabin or a house, it would not be unusual to begin with very precise and time-consuming labor as we prepare our foundation. But, when I ask you to join me in this labor as the foundation for a community, that may be another thing. Some of you may ask, "Isn't common attraction and similar intention enough?" "Can't we all just come as we are and all pile together to make a wonderful structure?" Yes, we could, but...little adjustments here and there;

constant repair, the windows won't open, the doors don't close. And, so, the cornerstones.

They aren't easy to haul into place. They require effort. And, even if you all join me in this labor, I am not sure how they will work. This is a great experiment; I am asking you to take on this task with no guaranteed results.

Here is what I do know.... The more I work with these stones, the more relevant they become. When I put weight on them, they become more and more essential for the creation of a healthy community based on mutual respect and individual expression. The more I look at them, the more multifaceted I discover that they are. So, if you will, help me. Help me move them into place as a foundation.

You don't need to agree with me about them. You may have well-thought-out arguments about their validity or sanity. Fine. Your arguments and your agreements can be the string that takes you into the maze of creating community. Grab hold of your own dialog and see where it leads you. Share your yeses and your nos. I ask you to play with these ideas. I hope that you will join me in a year-long experiment with them. What would it be like to build a self in a community built on these principles?

The world that I hope we will build with these stones is not based on my view of how the world is, but on a view of how it could be. I will agree with any of you who say, "but this is not how life is, this is not how my life is." The ideas that I am suggesting don't summarize the truths that our relationships are built on. It is for that very reason that I want to work with these cornerstones. I want to work with them because our normal interactions don't stand on these principles...but they could.

Imagine that you are a Goddess or a God, not one of the later ones who directs the fate of mortals with the rise of a finger, but an old God, a primordial Goddess...one of the world builders of a new pantheon.

Imagine yourself putting your shoulder to a huge boulder and pushing it steadily uphill to build a society. And, although you are alone as you read this, you are not alone in this task. Others who you can't see and may not know are also engaged in this work. Together we push. Together we place. Together we build. The first stone is Choice.

Choice

"Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law."

Aleister Crowley

Now that statement has been misunderstood for years. I don't share it with you because Crowley said it; in fact, I wish he hadn't. But regardless of the speaker, we are beings who choose, who have free will. If I won't admit that I have choice, I can't be empowered. If I don't accept that I have choice, I still believe that my life is determined by choice...but I believe that it is determined by the choices of others. As I become more actualized, I have more choices. I can choose what I do and what I don't do. I can choose what I say and how I communicate. Eventually, I can choose how I act and how I react to the world around me.

Crowley's controversial statement said, "Do what *thou* will." He was referring to the choices made by the divine self, not the ego self. Therein lies a lifetime of personal work. To follow Crowley's mandate, I have to know my divine self and how it differs from my ego self; I have to know the world around me and who other people really are. Choice is an action. It describes my relationship to the world; it does not imply that I created that world. The first Cornerstone for our community is **choice**.

You are a being with choice. You have the power to choose. This power, like all others, has limits and context. I am not saying that the world is shaped according to your choice or that everything about you was created by your free will. But you have chosen to join this community. Right now, you are choosing to read this material. You can choose to put it down. You can choose coffee or tea and what to put in your coffee or tea. A being with the power to choose has far more options than one who doesn't have choice. You can affect what you do, your relationships, your future and your own becoming. If you will agree with this paragraph, you are freer and more responsible than you were before you read it.

But no...wait. I am controlled by other people's choices. My boss, my partner, my children, my needs, my responsibilities...you don't understand. Yes, I chose coffee - with cream - but I didn't choose to sit here writing this... I *have* to do it. I have a deadline. My living depends on it. I have no choice.

Choice. I choose to do this. If I don't choose *to* write, I do choose *what* I write. I chose this life. I think about all of you. We all have to eat and have shelter, but each of us has a different way to move through the world, a different way to provide for our physical needs. We have a different definition of what is necessary. We have different ways to be productive, to be of service, to relate to friends, to fulfill our obligations to family. Different activities give our life meaning. We have made different choices.

When I say I choose this work, this life, even this deadline, my entire relationship to my life changes. I am more powerful. I am less a victim of circumstances. But...if I say I chose this life, how will I ever get help? How will I ever get sympathy? Does admitting choice mean I must live in a world without compassion or assistance? How can I ask for what I need if I tell you that I chose this job? Well, I could choose to ask for help and, if it is your choice, you could give it. You might want to help me even if my request is not based on a dire need imposed on me by outside forces.

You might want to help me even if I am doing what I want to do and I need help. You might join me because you want to do this job with me and your choice is based on the work that we can do together, rather than my state of being. And mutual desire might even be a more rewarding basis for our working relationship than desperation.

If I act from choice, then you will only be involved with me based on your choice. I give up the wondrous power of guilt, shame, and being controlled by desperate circumstances beyond my control.

There is great vulnerability in choice. There is great vulnerability in being powerful or empowered. Neither my honesty about having chosen my life nor the truth that I am a powerful and effective person condemns me to live in a world, alone, without help or

need for help. Knowing that I choose, that I do as I will, simply let's me see myself as accountable for the direction of my life.

I am accountable and the whole world is fluid. My deepest personal philosophy is based on choice, not absolute truth. I am accountable, if not for my fortune and my misfortune, for my continuing involvement in my fortune or misfortune. Choice - if you choose, can imply responsibility but not blame.

Choice does not change reality, only our relationship to it. Choice doesn't simplify the world; it makes it ultimately more complex. If I am going to think of myself as a being with choice, I need to know what my choices are.... I need to know the nature of things that are completely independent of me.

You are independent of me. I may choose to be in a relationship with you and I may choose not to be in a relationship with you, but I can't choose who you are. How do I choose? I have to talk to you, and listen to you. I have to accept your definition of who you are, and add to that my experience of you. I have to communicate, discern, choose and respect your choices. This boulder is getting heavier.

I am here at Diana's Grove because I choose to be. Choice implies personal power; it acknowledges power. Is that why we are afraid to admit we have it? At times, admitting that our actions are based on our choices is seen as selfishness. Choice does not imply motivation. We choose what we choose for a multitude of reasons, from a vast array of motivations. Our choices take us into pre-existing complex realities that were created without any input from us. The situations that we choose to enter may have been created without any consideration of our desires, intentions, wishes and wants. I can choose to go outside, but I don't choose the weather or the world.

I may choose to relate to you, but I can't choose how you will respond to me or what you will think of me. Based on how you respond, I can choose whether I wish to continue relating to you. I can choose to present this idea to you. I cannot choose how you will respond to it or to me for sharing it. If I decide that this idea has no merit, I can choose to develop another idea. My choices open a world of possibility for me to explore; but choice is not commitment. Commitment is a choice.

Empowerment - by its very nature it can only be gained through choice. It can't ever be given to anyone against their will. The most magical ritual or process isn't empowering unless you choose it or have choice within it.

Freedom is abandonment when it is given without choice. Talent is a burden if someone else decides you should develop it. Destiny ceases to be a path to self-actualization and becomes a prison if we have no free will. When we have no choice, we have no power. So - if you choose, help me put the power of choice in place as a cornerstone for this year.

If we want to build a community based on choice, we need to have greater clarity about what we are; a clearer self definition. We need to let you know what you are choosing. We have a responsibility to define and communicate our structures, agreements, and boundaries.

Choice - I am mystified as to why, when we admit that we have the power to choose, that truth is handed back to us as if we then must have designed the world according to

our desires. Realizing that we have choice doesn't mean that we choose everything that happens to us or everything that we are. When this principle is used to define the totality of reality, it can become a boulder held over our heads, rather than a cornerstone to build upon.

When I stand on the cornerstone of choice, I have far more choices than I realized. Even if I didn't choose the menu, I can choose whether I want to eat. I may not choose what happens, but I can choose how I act and, at times, react to what happens. I don't choose the facts, but I do choose what I consider to be relevant or true from many possible perceptions of experience.

Your involvement in this group is an exercise in choice; it is an affirmation of your ability to choose this magical journey for yourself, and to choose how you will use what we offer. Take your ability to choose into your hands and see if it enables you to move more freely through your days, your life and your relationships.

Can you choose another way to perceive a situation or your role in a relationship? Can you look for choices in an area of your life where you feel trapped? Does the idea that you have choice let you move more freely through the minutes of your day? Does it let you move more freely through the labyrinth of your emotions? Does the idea that you might possibly be free to choose how you will act or react free you? Does the realization that you are the one who arranges the obvious facts of a situation so they add up to the truth free you? When you grab the right to choose, how heavy is it? Are you lighter when you hold it?

Your choices bring you into situations and relationships. You may, at times, need to choose again. You can choose to make another choice. But only if you know that you can choose to go, will you ever truly know that you choose to stay.

"We are the sum total of our choices"

Woody Allen

Thinking Well of the Group

A concept shared with me by a Quaker...I wish I had a dictionary where I could look up "Thinking Well of the Group" and a succinct explanation would appear. One that would not require rewriting fifty years of psychology. But I don't have such a dictionary.

Thinking Well of the Group begins as simply as Choice. If you choose to be in this group or community, you choose it because you think well of it. Because you choose to be Mystery School, I assume that you assume that what happens here is done by well-meaning people who are committed to personal growth, empowerment, spiritual development and building a healthy, respectful relationship with you. I can only assume this if I believe that you are here out of your own choice.

At times during the year, you may have an experience that is not empowering, that is not healthy and respectful. When that happens, if you think well of the group, you can say, "Wow, that was off. What happened there?" And the person who hurt you or disappointed you can answer you.

Each of us comes into a group with a history. We have experiences of exclusion, of not fitting in, of being hurt by hierarchical structures. We have all been discounted, unheard,

and unseen. At times we have been seen and still were rejected or excluded. And we are fairly sophisticated people with psychological savvy. We can assign motivation to an action, we can diagnose the actor. "That was a power play." "She is just so insecure."

We are smart enough to look for the undercurrent in a group. We can find the dynamic. Who is in power? What does the group really want from you? What do you need to know or say to fit in? Who gets the best bed and how did they get it?

Everything isn't really all peace and harmony and, if it is, what will happen if you disagree? What will you do if you just don't like someone? What will happen if someone doesn't like you? What if you're too friendly and someone thinks your attempt to connect is a sexual violation? What if you are too self-contained and everyone thinks you are unfriendly? What if you ask the wrong question and everyone thinks you are dumb? What if you have the answer and the group thinks you are arrogant? How can you really be safe in a new group? Don't trust the surface or the obvious. Watch for clues. Discover the feelings beneath the surface. Become highly sensitive to subtle indications of rejection, of inclusion, of boundaries and expectations.

And the minute that your old dis-empowering patterns appear, then you will know the truth. Then you will know what this group is really like. I am going to bring my *Guide to Good Groups*. I will reference it when I am safe in my car. Were the chairs in a circle or a row? Did they recycle? What about compost? What about that group that meets in the cabin before the weekend begins? Is that hierarchy or what? Someone cast the circle and it wasn't me; there must be an "in" group. I was asked to call a direction...well - it was more like I was told to - is that empowerment? Thinking well of the group - is that just a fancy way to mandate denial?

But what if.... What if....

What if this group is committed to personal growth, to the good of all, and to respect for each other? People in the group have relationships with each other. They have personal comforts and discomforts. Some will be comfortable with me and others won't be. What if all of the interactions that I see between people are individual? Some are perfectly appropriate for me to join and others have nothing to do with me and may have nothing to do with Mystery School at all.

What if everyone were struggling with the same issues - inclusion, personal comfort, self-expression and connection? What if we all are doing the best that we can and, at times, folks aren't going to act or react in the way that best meets my needs?

Choice. I choose to be here. I choose to be with these people and I choose to think well of them. If someone or something hurts me, I will express my discomfort and hear the response. And if something I do causes discomfort, I am willing to hear about my actions as a statement about my actions, rather than about me.

Thinking well of the group. I had a dog named Ginger. She was only 14 inches high and weighed about 20 pounds. She was a small King Charles Cavalier Spaniel. Ginger was timid and shy, an introvert by nature. She was very much her own dog. She met the world on her own terms; she was timid but not intimidated. Ginger was my mentor for almost 13 years. She thought well of the group.

The world was her group. Everywhere she went, she assumed that people would like her and that they would interact with her with kindness. She wasn't always right but she was right often enough. I am much taller and heavier than Ginger and thinking well of the group is a new concept for me. I know better than to expect people to be well-intended. I am more intelligent than a dog. During the time we spent together, I knew things about people that Ginger did not know. I didn't assume that people would like me; I didn't expect kindness.

Ginger was right about 80% of the time. I was wrong about 80% of the time. Ginger was surprised by the small amount of hostility she found in the world. I was surprised far more often by the large amount of kindness. Ginger was indifferent to indifference. I spent a great deal of time ruminating over indifference. Ginger and I - we shared a world but not a philosophy.

And now, four year's after her death, I offer Ginger's view of humanity as a cornerstone for a healthy community. Think well of each other. At least choose to review an experience with the possibility that we have come together with the intention of mutual benefit, and that we are all wanting to form empowering, authentic relationships. I don't deny, and neither would Ginger, that we make mistakes. And, at times, the choices that others make may disappoint me or not fulfill my desires. There may even be people who don't like me and who I don't like...but that doesn't take away from the essential goodness of either of us, or from the worth of the group.

I leave this concept, this cornerstone wondering why, when we close our eyes to the sincerely good intentions of others, it is rarely called denial. When we choose to see well-meaning intentions rather than pathology, it is.

Thinking Well of Yourself

The group, a group of individuals...you are one of those individuals. If you are going to think well of the group, you have to think well of yourself. Now this may be the fundamental difference between me and Ginger. Okay...she was a dog and I am human, but deeper than that.... Ginger lived in a state of Grace. She did not know about original sin. Nature or nurture, you may ask. Ginger had stories of a troubled puppyhood. Not the stories of the hounds of the Ozarks by any means, but she cringed when she saw a flyswatter for her entire life. That untold story was, for Ginger, about her abuser and never about her. It was not about whether she was a good dog or a bad dog.

A cornerstone equal to and parallel with "thinking well of the group" is "thinking well of yourself." What if for one year, in your interactions with this group, you were to build your relationships on the cornerstone that you are a worthwhile being in the process of becoming whole, and so is everyone else.

What if all of our differences, the different skills that we have developed, our different styles of relating, our different sizes and shapes, our varying choices about education, income, and partners were just that: information about the different paths that we have walked and the choices that we made along the way?

What would it be like if our choices were never used to determine our worth? What would it be like if the only criteria for determining our success or our failure was our relationship to our own goals?

Success. Failure. What would it be like if all of our failings or mistakes simply let us know what we were currently learning, the road signs that tell us we are on a growing edge? What if we formed a community where our mistakes were never used as statements about what we innately are; about our intelligence, adaptability or true nature? What if all of our successes were just times when we fulfilled an intention, and they, too, weren't statements of our current value?

When your essential worth is not in question, then conversations can be about what happened, rather than about what we are. We may want to share our intentions or the process that led to our choices, but what if for one year, you never had to defend your essential worth to yourself? What if you could say yes when you wanted to and no when you wanted to? What if your worth was not dependent on giving anyone what they wanted, nor was it dependent on not asking anyone for anything that they are unwilling to give?

These stones in place, we have the power of Choice; we Think Well of Ourselves, we Think Well of the Group. Will these stones hold the complexities of interaction - moments of discovery, soul touching intimacy, romance, disillusionment, disappointment, friendships found and friendships lost? The dramas and adventures of human interaction remain the same but, built on these cornerstones, a very different play emerges. There are no villains to be easily banished; there are no victims to defend; there are simply humans doing their very best to be whole and grow in a community with others.

Stewardship of the Self

On two different occasions I have heard the fans and friends of Buckminster Fuller tell the story of his life. At his darkest hour, he went to Lake Michigan in the middle of the night with the intention of making the world a better place by leaving it. Rather than killing himself at this moment of choice, he was seized by an idea, by a possible truth: that he did not own himself. He did not have the right to destroy his body and talent, his history and his future. He considered the possibility that he was not the owner of the being he called I, but its steward. This concept became a cornerstone for the remainder of his life.

What if you don't own yourself? What if you don't belong to you? Most of us can agree that we morally can't own another person; we ethically don't own our children. Many of us question whether it is ethical to "own" an animal or a piece of land if "ownership" means that our possession has no rights. Take one step further, just for this year, and see whether the idea that you are a Steward of Yourself impacts your relationship to yourself.

To own: to possess, to have and hold property. To have command of....

To Steward: to be a guardian; a steward is one who is employed to take care of....

Aside from the obvious responsibility of being a guardian, a steward is employed to do a job. What if taking care of yourself - your body, soul, talent, time, and energy - was your job? There is an implication that you are accountable to some higher being for this charge.

This stone, like the three that have preceded it, is not one that I ask you to accept as a truth, but to work with as a possible foundation for building a different structure. Does it change your relationship to yourself, to time, to your other choices?

How would your life change if, for this year, you did not own yourself but were the steward of your body, talent, time and soul? As steward, what changes would you make? What priorities would shift? If.... If you were the Steward of Yourself....

Taking this idea back to community.... Your personality, philosophy, spiritual reality, and individual expression are uniquely yours, but we, as a group, agree to build our relationships as people who are empowered and act in accordance with our own choices, who think well of ourselves and of each other, and who have the job of taking care of ourselves.

One more idea, one more cornerstone. Not four, but five. Did you think this foundation would be square? Where does the fifth one go? It is up to you. It is a new paradigm. It may differ for each of us. The final stone is the concept of a Sacred Wound that Begins Life.

Sacred Wound that Begins Life

“As seed-making begins with the wounding of the ovum by the sperm, so does soul-making begin with the wounding of the psyche by the Larger Story.”

Jean Houston

The four preceding ideas that have been presented as Cornerstones for Building a Community might wound your reality. They might violate your way of perceiving community or individual responsibility within a community. They might wound your way of seeing yourself.

I often discover that my reality has been wounded when I try to continue my old way of being. If I can't go on as I was, my reality has been wounded. When my reality has been wounded - penetrated by a possibility - then nothing is quite the same. I can't put my old shoes back on; they no longer fit. Truth wounds illusion. Hope wounds despair. Friendship wounds isolation. Reality is never safe. My reality has been wounded. It has a sacred wound and, therefore, a new reality has the possibility of being conceived.

Sometimes this conception has nothing to do with my apparent choices. My complacency is broken by an uninvited outside revelation and life is never again the same. Sometimes I invite the process that will bring me my sacred wound. The wounding can be gentle, even seductive...an idea seduces me. I court it and call it. I send it flowers. I slip into bed with it and lose myself in its embrace. I make love to it. Reality is violated. I am never again the same.

Even now, I yearn for a time when I was not so aware that I have chosen my life and my work. I would like to indulge in not thinking well of, and revel in the juicy complaints and

truths that don't have the same windy force when I simply acknowledge the simple good intention of others who may choose to do things differently from me.

My old shoes don't fit. The new ones aren't comfortable. My way of seeing the world has been violated by these ideas. Some of my ways of getting my needs met no longer work for me. My excuses have holes in them. I have been touched and, therefore, I am changed. These four ideas haven't damaged the integrity of who I am but they have impacted the pathology that was my identity.

These ideas break the circle of known reality, they are a wound. Change begins with wounding. Creation begins with wounding. The egg is wounded by the sperm and life begins. Concept, conception, the conception of a self, self-concept.

We each enter this community wounded. Our individual wounds are a part of who we are and of our unique vision of the world. They are a part of our becoming and a part of our mythic journey, the great story that we live. Our wounds, although unique, don't set us apart from each other. They are one of our common bonds. They are a piece of our common heritage. We all have stories of pain and heroism. We all can define ourselves by the violations to our soul, the impact on our bodies, or by betrayals that have wounded our hearts. Our wounds are unique, but that we are wounded is not. It is because of them rather than in spite of them that we each enter this community as whole beings.

Sacred wounds...Jean Houston says "The wounding becomes sacred when we are willing to release our old stories and to become the vehicles through which the new story may emerge into time. When we fail to do this, we repeat the same old story over and over again."

Sacred wounds - a cornerstone. We have stories of victory that have made us who we are. We have stories of pain that have made us who we are. Some we will tell and some are never told. The tragedy is not that we have experienced pain, but that we allow it to eclipse all that follows it; that we keep it ever present and our lives unchanged by all of the experiences that follow. What if we were to make our wounds and ourselves sacred by sacrificing them and opening ourselves to the greater story, the story of all that we have become and all that we are becoming.

But, what is that story? We will only know when we create it. So, step. Step into your larger story. Live that story fully, knowing that you will again be wounded and you will again be healed.

"Work as if you don't need the money.

Dance as if no one is looking and

Love as if you have never been hurt."

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Astrology and the Wheel of the Year

By Cynthia Jones
- Mystery School 1997 -

As below, so above

In Mystery School 1996, we focused on a collection of magical arts; Tarot and astrology- my original favorites- were among them. In Mystery School 2000, we had an astrology breakfast every Sunday morning, a time to talk about the basics, to learn the astrological language.

Astrology

The night speaks. The planets in their course around the sun exchange secrets.... Secrets about you. Astrology tells the stories of seasons as defined by the earth's relationship with the sun. The sun, and the cycles of increasing and decreasing light, tell stories that are instinctively known by plants and animals. You, too, know this story.

Astrology tells the story of the seasons as if those seasons were held by the stars in the sky. Earth's seasons are projected into the sky. Each portion of the sky remembers Earth and a specific season. Those stars, those segments of the sky, tell and retell the myth of the season that they love. The sky holds myths of sprouting and growing, of blooming and becoming. The seasons dance in the sky above us and below us.

The Sun, Moon and planets move through segments of the sky that we call the astrological signs. As they do, they dress themselves in the wisdom of the seasons. Each planet cloaks itself in the qualities and urges that are intrinsic to the sign.

All the seasons dance above us and within us. The sun will dance through all the seasons in the coming year. Listen. Listen to the earth speak to the sun at sunrise. Listen to the sun retell the story of the season, stories known as Aries, Taurus, and Gemini. You know the stories, we call them signs.

In the ***Moon Shadows*** book, each month includes a review of the sign.

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What if... What if..... What if.....
Opening to the Sacred - Invoking Ourselves
 by Cynthia Jones
 - Mystery School 2000 -

This is from Mystery School 2001. Although the idea isn't new last year, it found words that year. Every year, we are challenged to hear the sacred as it invoke us.

Opening to the Sacred

"I heard small kingdoms breathing around me, the insects, and the birds who do their work in darkness. By morning I had vanished at least a dozen times into something better."
 Mary Oliver, *Twelve Moons*

To enter the sacred requires us to think in a different language. When we see the world as sacred, we think about it differently. We hold it in our minds with gentle hands; our very description of the world around us affirms the worth of other creatures and the wonder of life.

My consciousness has outgrown my practices. What do I do now?

When I do magical work, I begin by "creating sacred space." Create sacred space. I love the process of grounding, casting a circle, and speaking to the elements, but I am appalled at how easily I accept the idea that I can, with my brief human doings, "create sacred space."

My consciousness has outgrown my practices. What do I do now?

A few years ago, I realized that I have been ritualizing, as the core of my spiritual practice, a way of relating to the world that is, for me, untrue and contradictory to my deepest beliefs about life and nature. I have been ritualizing the belief that I create Sacred Space. And then, to take my human arrogance one step further, when my rituals and rites have ended...I release the sacred. I give it permission to go back to where it came from.

I understand the history of my practices. I understand the slow evolution from evoking the elementals - summoning them to come on my command to do my bidding - to invoking them. In my circle, we invite the elementals to be present by speaking to the sacred spirit in life and nature. Evoking refers to summoning a lesser being. Invoking is used to invite a higher spiritual form like a Goddess or a God to witness or bless the mystical rites and magical work. Respect for earth, life and egalitarian values drew me into earth-based spirituality. So deeply did I embrace these values that I was barely aware of the dichotomy. Ritual practices that were filled with summoning and commands evoked the very human hierarchy that my spiritual philosophy wished to heal.

When I considered history, I could see that when we lived in a more primitive world, our daily life informed us of how powerless we were...and still are. When we faced the forces of nature and weather daily, we wanted our Shamans to have power over the air,

fire, water and earth. We wanted them to be able to command and direct the elements so we could all step out of fear and spend a moment in a well constructed illusion of control. When the balance shifted and we became, if not the controllers of nature, certainly her abuser, our earth-based spirituality began to embody a respect for the elements. In my ritual work, I wanted to express my respect for nature and, so, evoking gave way to invoking.

Magic words that could “summon,” “conjure” and “call thee up” to do the Priestess’ bidding changed to prayer and reverence. We began to forget memorized invocations and speak from our hearts to the life force around us. “Be here now” became “Thank you.” But still, although I knew my intention was to stop time and honor the wholeness of life and nature, those who watched me saw me respectfully “create sacred space.”

My consciousness has outgrown my practices. What do I do now?

I don’t believe that I create sacred space; I believe that space is sacred, life is sacred, and at times I can invoke an awareness of the sacred within myself. I can invoke an appreciation of life and my awe-filled respect for my community and our willingness to work together at the edge of magic.

A circle of people who gather to honor life, growth and each other is certainly sacred. The circle that I cast when we are together isn’t to keep malevolent forces out or even to hold the group energies in; it is to acknowledge that we are taking time to work together in a mystical way. It is to invoke attention and unify consciousness as we move into mythic work and magical thinking together.

Casting the circle brings us together in body, mind, focus and intention. It connects us to each other and to the intention of the work that we are going to do together. A group of people in spiritual communion who focus on the same intention do indeed intensify and contain the energy. A touch moves around the circle. Our eyes all join in the same imagining. Together, we focus on one thing, one sound, one image. Our attention is invoked. The Circle is Cast.

Into this circle, we invite air, fire, water and earth. Into this moment, I invoke my own awareness of the ever-present mystery of life. How can I ritualize my awareness of the breath of life, the spark of spirit, the awesome depth and mystery that is called soul and, finally, the privilege of being alive? How can I ritually conjure and call up my awareness that the earth is also a living form?

The breath of life moves as the winds. Energy and life-force are generated by the solar fire and reflected in small earthbound flames. The great depth of ‘soul’ is pictured in the many mysterious forms of water. And, finally, I acknowledge the land and earth as a living body. I invoke my own awareness of “the sacred,” but I have not yet discovered how to ritualize my experience of invoking awareness within myself and “opening to” the moment.

My consciousness has outgrown my practices. What do I do now?

I ask you to help me. Mystery School 2000 is devoted to communion with the land. When I asked the land and the Faerie Queen what they thought of our style of invoking them - I knew better than to ask them how they felt about being evoked - they wanted

me to know that they would love to see us find a way to “open to the sacred” rather than gather together to pretend that we create it.

Will you join me in discovering and inventing a ritual practice, a way to ritualize “opening to” the sacred that is ever-present, and invoking our own awareness of the wonder and magic that lives in the world around us?

What if.... What if.... What if....

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The Creed of
The Rites of Passage Team
- Mystery School 2000 -

*Arden, Jan, Lili, Sue and Todd,
thank you for your experience and this wisdom.*

There are no mistakes - only re-takes.

You are not alone.

Speak from the heart.

Support each other.

The Creed of
The Rites of Passage Team
- Mystery School 2002 -

**Act with all your heart
and give the outcome to the Gods.**

*Barb, Doris, Llyr, Pamela, and Teresa [River],
thanks for all of the heart, and thanks for the outcome!*

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Into the Wild:
Redefining Instinct, Intuition and the wilderness
by Cynthia Jones
- Mystery School 2001 -

Calling Life from the Corners
The Story of the Shaman and the Wolf

Do you remember those Fairy Tales we grew up with? So many of them begin with a child - an innocent - going out into the wild.... Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Ridinghood, Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Those old folk tales come from a time when the challenge was to overcome what was out there. To thrive, we needed to know how to go out, to go beyond our limits and go beyond the edge of our village, to go into the wild. Going out into the wild was the adventurer's challenge, the hero's journey. Unfortunately, we have very little of that kind of "wild" left. Today's hero finds a different kind of wilderness calling her to step into danger. She finds a different kind of wilderness offering her a hero's journey. We need to go into a different kind of wild.

Today's hero is challenged to go into a different kind of wilderness. How do I know that? I know it intuitively. I just know it. Intuition. A wise woman once told me that intuition was the instinct of the soul and instinct was the intuition of the body. Here is what else she told me....

Instinct. So often, we think of instinct as reflex. Just that. No more. Reflex. Fight. Flight. Freeze. Instinct can be dismissed as an "inborn impulse," a "natural aptitude." But, having been a wolf, let me tell you...instinct is much more than that. Instinct is much richer. It is deeper, darker, and more vibrant than reflex. It is more for the wolf...and it is more for us.

Instinct, that word is used to describe the way a mother cares for a child, particularly if the mother is an animal. When the mother is a human, we call it love. Instinct: the wolf marks his territory. The patriarch protects the pack, the matriarch protects the young; instinct is all of this, and more....

Intuition is a way of knowing. It is a direct communication from the part of the brain that sees in wholes. It is a whole story written by the part of us that responds to patterns, and instinctively comprehends sequence and the natural rhythm of things. Instinct speaks directly to our bodies. Intuition speaks to our hearts. It gives us a sense of things, a knowing. Intuition is non-verbal consciousness. It is knowing...without the sequential explanation that words give us and require from us.

Instinct is an aspect of our intuition that deals with our fitness. Not our survival; we are more complex than that; wolves are more complex than that. Instinct is our intuitive need to act in a way that will sustain not only ourselves, but our pack, our clan, our group. It is the impulse in our soul to sustain our children and to create a world that will feed our grandchildren. It is the impulse to enable that which we bring forth to be sustained, to flourish.

That which we bring forth...yes, our children, but we also instinctively want to assure that our ideas, the children of our minds, will survive. We act so that our values, the children of our soul, will survive. We are not so different from the wolves.

Instinct is not a word that begins and ends with instant knowing. It is not a word that implies a *fait accompli*. Think about it in the simplest of terms. Fight and Flight. The "instinct" to run does not give you the ability to run well. The response to fight doesn't give me the ability to fight effectively. Instinct is like that. My body might know how to give birth, and I might be filled with the desire to nurture a child, but if I want to do that well, I need to learn the skills that parenting requires.

A dog's body might know how to bring her puppies into life but, if she wants to play with them, she needs to know how to play. If she wants to teach them how to hunt and fight and surrender, she needs to know the game of hunt-fight-surrender. We might have the instinct to teach our children how to get along in the world, but we can only teach what we know. Play: certain postures are natural, instinctive, but every pack has a dialect. A dog teaches her puppies body language. Play is the practice of communication. The players learn how to listen to the body language of other dogs. They learn how to discuss relevant issues with sounds and posture. They learn how to speak, and how to hear, personal boundaries. With dogs and wolves and people, we can only teach what we know. Instinct can be educated.

Educated instinct: we can learn the skills that enable our instincts to effectively serve us.

Smart instinct differs from educated instinct. Educated instinct might give me the ability to survive. Smart instinct is the instinct to learn how to create the relationships that enable me to work with others. That kind of instinct will assure my survival. It will work for the survival of my children. If instinct is the desire to enable that which I bring forth to live well, to prosper, then the instinct to build effective relationships is a basic instinct. Healthy relationships - creating an effective community - will do more to sustain our children, our ideas, our values, and our clan than the ability to fight or to flee.

The ability to get along is essential to our fitness. Fitness: to act and react in a way that assures the survival of what we value. It is the innate knowledge that if our "group" survives, we will be a part of the pattern of its story. Intuition is the piece of us that sees patterns and relationships. Instinct: intuition that deals with our fitness.

Instinctually, there are two things that are essential to our fitness. First, our status in the pack. Status: our place in the pack. First we want a place. Then we want a desirable place. Admittedly, desirable is subjective. No, we don't all want to be top dog or Alpha wolf. Some dogs want to be Omega dogs. They were born for it. They did it really well until they saw that ad where all of the Alpha dogs were hanging out, smoking cigarettes and barking at the women. We sell that "top dog" status but, maybe, what we all want is a place that is truly and legitimately ours. Then we want our pack to have a place in the world. We want to know that we belong in the world and we want to know that we are a part of something that matters.

Intuitively, I can feel you wonder whether there is any truth in this. Instinctively, I know that you are listening to me with one ear interested and one ear fixed on a multitude of arguments. I can feel some of you screaming "I don't care about 'status.' I don't care if

my 'group' has status". I won't argue with you. You, indeed, might be the exception...but look at the rest of the world. Look at the world in large terms. We all want a place in our society that is our own. Our social-political world is based on the survival of our group.

Instinctively, intuitively, world religions develop a theology that assures that they will survive. If they don't, they perish. Dietary laws and sexual ethics enabled a group to survive and then thrive. Patriotism is the willingness to act so the group we call our country will survive. What do we die for? The survival of our group. That might be an organized group. It might be a group that is bound together by ideology, mutual values, a political cause or a deeply felt belief. The instinct for survival is often replaced by a smarter instinct, the instinct to sustain something that is larger and more enduring than we are, an instinct to sustain each other.

Shhhh.... Listen. Listen deeply. Listen with the piece of you that sees the patterns and understands that you hold a place in the passing of time. Listen. Instinct...it is natural to care deeply about the survival of your group, of those who gather to help you raise your ideas, your values and your children, and those who will band together to provide health and wholeness for what you love. It is natural to want a place in the world and to be recognized and valued for who you are within that group. It is instinctual.

Going into the wild

Instinct: Intuition that deals with our fitness, that inspires us to act for the good of ourselves and for the good of our group, our pack. Instinct: the impulse; an impulse that begs us to learn the skills that it requires. My wolf-self asks your human-self, "What good is the impulse to run for your life if you don't have the ability to run? What good is the impulse to fight a predator if you don't have the skills to win? What if the skills you need don't have anything to do with fight or flight? What if your survival is based on your ability to work and play with others and you can't learn them by working out alone?" That would be "going into the wild"...the wild of interpersonal relationships.

Look at your instincts. Ask yourself, what would be your chances of survival if you lived alone...all alone? No relationships to enable you to get your food. No relationships to help you when you are sick? Humans romanticize the "lone wolf;" wolves do not. If the idea of living without any relationships is too seductive for you to part with, then think of the fitness of your children or your ideas. How well would they do if you were alone in the wilderness? What about your grandchildren? Yes, grandchildren, for the effectiveness of a society is not told in one generation. Do ideas that live alone have grandchildren?

The hero's journey that we face is not one that asks us to have the courage to turn away from the pack. The hero's journey, the challenge of our times, is to have the courage to go into the wilderness of interpersonal relationships and learn how to build effective and healthy interactions. That takes far more courage than withdrawing into the mythology of the romantic loner every time a misunderstanding arises within a group or in a relationship.

Do you have the courage to go into the pack, to learn to build effective relationships with others who hold values that you believe in, who will raise your ideas as their own? We

find such groups. Our instincts draw us into the wild of relationships. Once there, we discover that we need to learn how to connect. We need to learn how to build relationships. We need to learn how to find our place in the pack.

Go into the wild.... Do you have the courage to care about those that you call your community? Do you have the courage to build relationships with those who value what you value? This is the wilderness before us now.

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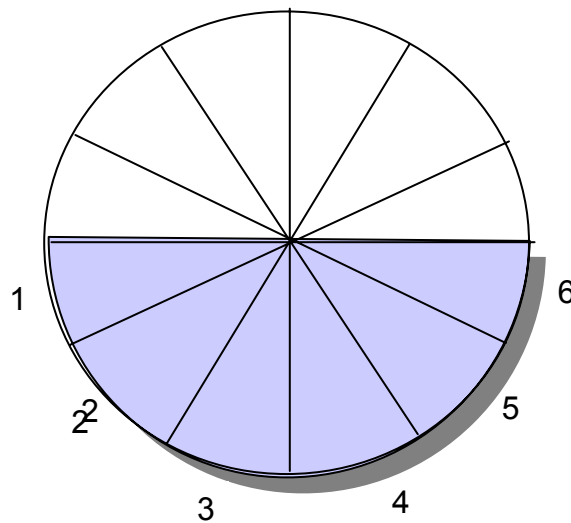
The Mandala
by Cynthia Jones
- Mystery School 2001 -

This piece is also from the Shaman and the Wolf.

It looks like an astrological chart. It is and it isn't an astrological chart. It is a circle divided into twelve segments, twelve chambers, houses or pies. It is a circle, a medicine circle, a star circle, a portrait circle, a promise circle. On Sunday mornings of Mystery School 2001, we looked not only at this circle but at the relationship between every segment of the circle and every other segment. The pattern of relationships gave me a key to understanding the nature of our inner realities.

In astrology, each segment is called a house. Each house is described by the pattern of planets in the sky. In the Mandala, each chamber is defined by choice, intention and self-declaration. On the last weekend of the year, I finally found a way to explain the chambers. Here it is....

*By bone and by stone,
the world is made.*



So below

1) A bone in the first chamber will tell you who you are.... Choose it well for you will be remembered by it. It will define you long after you have put it down. That bone you choose to say who you are...you might decide to place it in your past when you take, when you make another...but it will haunt you. "I remember you...." In your dreams, a voice from your past will seize the bone that you have cast away and say, "I know you; I know who you are. I know what you are." In your dreams, a voice from your future will say, "I, too, remember who you are and what you are."

2) A stone in the second will represent what you hold sacred: what you stand for and what you stand on. Mother, country and the pursuit of happiness.... Well then...Goddess, the innate value of land and the pursuit of justice. Well then...God, free enterprise and pursuit for the sake of pursuing. What do you stand for? What do you

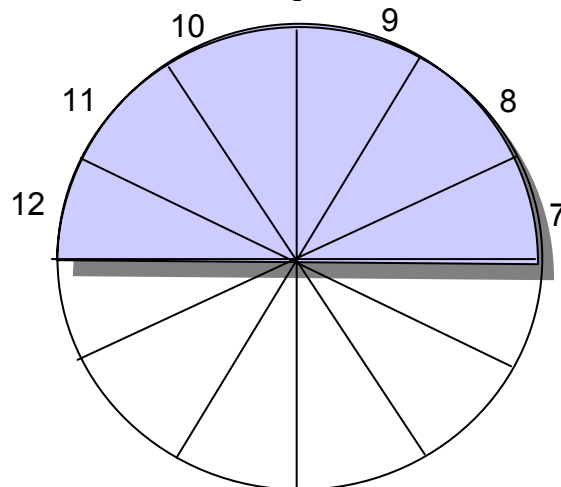
stand on? So many stones seek to fill this chamber when it is left empty. Value this and you'll be valuable.... So many stones clamor for your attention. They fall from the slick pages of the latest magazine. Stone sellers call out the value of their wares. So many stones....

3) **A bone for the third**, a rib bone... What do you teach; what do you learn; what stories fill your soul? How do you speak; how do you listen; what stories fill your soul? This chamber is filled with the bones of all of the truths that you have devoured. The truths consumed, their bones sucked clean.... What you've learned is what you teach.

4) **A hidden stone is in the fourth**. Buried deep, cradled in the earth; each year, the leaves fall. Layer upon layer, life covers it over. Layer upon layer, time falls and smoothes the surface. Buried deep, this stone sleeps. It sleeps unchanged. On this stone the wheel sits. With its weight, the wheel turns.

5) **Bring all the stones and bones into this chamber**. Bring them in. Sit down. Play with the pieces. This chamber isn't about the bones; it's about what you do with the bones. It isn't about the stones; it's about what you do with the stones. Creation...what have you made from the stuff of your life? What patterns, what designs, what creations...? Art: a bone draws a line in the sand. An arrangement of stones sing hymns to the stars. What do you make with the bones? What have you done with stones?

6) **In this chamber, choose a stone that fits your hand**. Worn smooth from use, the bones and stones have work to do. Bones and stones...they make a line, make a bridge, make stone soup, feed the dogs. Any service is better than no service. What do you do with the bones you have, with the stones you have? Which ones are too valuable to use, too precious to share? In this chamber, the bones you use grow strong; the ones that are held safe dissolve. In this chamber, the stones grind corn. They chip away at the rough edges of tools in the making.



As Above

7) **This is the home of those other stones...those *Other Stones***. Here you will find the bones that you thought belonged to someone else. Here you have the stones that you accepted as a gesture of friendship. The stones of admiration lie alongside the stones that you have coveted. Here is where you find the stones that you have used as weapons of defense - gifts from your enemies who poked at your limitations and your

weaknesses – and, by doing so, made you aware of your power and your strength. Those enemies, you call them other. What a surprise it is to find that their bones are in your soul and, then, to discover that they aren't missing any...not a one.

8) **In this place, you will find the bones that have no owner.** Not yours and not *not yours*. Here are the bones of experiences shared, the bones of a passion that blended you forever with another. Here you find the bones that were forged together, bones that are fused beyond individual identity in the heat of a life shared. Here are the bones that you inherited from your great-great-grandparents; legacy bones, culture bones. Here are the blended bones of those who died together in a great battle that transcends individual identity. Here are the bones that have forgotten who they are in remembrance of what they are a part of.

9) **And here are the bones of your philosophy.** Here are the philosopher's bones. Saint's bones and star bones; dream bones and mythic bones. In this sacred place, we place the bones of the late immortals, of long-gone Goddesses and almost-forgotten Gods. We place the bones of legends here. We keep the bones of hope here. In this place, we keep the bones that give life meaning.

10) **In this chamber, we pile the stones.** One at a time, we build a foundation that will let us *rise above* in our pursuit of worthy work. We pile the stones, one at a time, so that we can rise above...above the crowd, above prediction, above defeat, above our fears that we have nothing truly unique to give to the world. We pile the stones, one by one, in the silent hope that we will leave something behind that will make the world a little richer. We pile the stones, a ritual, a prayer; a prayer that our lives will be worthy...worthy of remembrance.

11) **And this chamber holds the nameless bones** - the white and faceless bones - all the same, all equal; bleached clean from personal yearning. This chamber holds the bones that have been healed by time. Universal - no longer personal - these bones settle into one another in the way that good friends finally rest when knowledge takes away the desire for understanding.

12) **And here, the bones dissolve.** They become one with the earth. The stones dissolve. They become one with the earth. Sand.

Who lays the bones?

You do.

You do.

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Myths about Power, Community, Heroes and Being Hero-less

by Cynthia Jones
- Mystery School 2003 -

*This is the **Emperor** offering from our two-year tour through the Major Archetypes of the Tarot.*

“It has been said that the greatest teacher is the Sanga, the community,” is the opening quote in Catherine’s recent post on myths and creating myths that support community.

“Are there myths that focus on community rather than on elevating individuals within the community?” Catherine and Barauch ask.

That question is packed with other questions. As I read that sentence, I hunger to address the way a story is perceived and told, as well as to address the story itself. I yearn to address the way we hear, present, and enact a myth. What we do with a myth, how we tell it and how we hear it, can make almost any classic myth into a single-hero story...or into a community-based, we-are-all-heroes myth.

To tell a myth that supports a healthy community, we need to know what makes a community healthy. We then need to *mythologize* healthy behavior...in our stories and in the way we treat each other. Jean Houston once said that if we really want to end war, we have to make peace sexy. If we really want healthy communities and healthy leaders, we have to make heroes out of those who share power, out of those who empower others. What a trick...invisible leadership has to be seen as glamorous. The term “servant leadership” indicates that those who serve are as valuable as those who are served. We have to tell these new stories and...we have to live them.

When I work with a myth, the characters are interdependent. The hero is dependent on others. She needs help; he needs the support of others. Although the story may have one main character, it will have many *heroic* characters - women and men, young and old. My myths have no villains. They won’t shame or blame the listener. The story won’t encourage the group to polarize against an evil persona. A healthy myth, just like a healthy community, has to seek solutions rather than find fault. But, most of all, a myth that supports community has to have characters who support community.

Even when all those aspects of a story are in place, if a myth is going to support a community, the hero has to be seen as an aspect within each listener. When Joseph Campbell talked about the Hero’s Journey and the Hero with a Thousand Faces, he was referring to the hero within each of us. We are the thousand faces that the hero wears as she journeys to...wholeness, individuation, health, right action, right livelihood, or purpose. Look in the mirror; there he is. Look at the person standing next to you, there she is. Odysseus was an early model for the Hero’s Journey. His name means *Journeyer*. Psyche’s name means *Breath*. It means *Soul*. Those ancient storytellers were telling us, “This is your story.”

Most myths, if they are told with the intention of building community and affirming the value of each person present, can be told in a way that promotes mutual value and

respect...and any myth can be used for the aggrandizement of a single person, quality or persona. But I find aggrandizement - the elevation of a few over the many - is more often found in the myths that a community lives, rather than in the myths that it tells. We love heroes. We love to elevate teachers, performers, and personalities above the group. We put people in that role with and without their encouragement, with and without their permission. Why? Why do groups that value community create an elite and then set them outside of the community's agreements, processes and procedures?

Who does that? We do. Those who don't want power will create an elite, a living hero myth, to have a strong parent figure who will make all of the decisions and bear the consequences of those decisions. Those who don't want to be self-responsible will create a power structure to have someone who has the answer and the solution. Those who want power will create an elite so they can become one of the elite. As Skippy says, "it is good to be top dog." Then there is the *excellent by association* myth that your ego tells. If I can associate with the people I admire, I will be admirable. The greater the distinction between hero and community, the closer I get to being a hero myself. If we don't explore these dynamics within ourselves, we will project them into our communities and live them there. We will be drawn to communities that embody our unconscious beliefs about power, value and leadership. Therefore, a myth that supports community is any myth that leads us into our buried issues and belief systems.

If we tend to turn leaders into heroes, is it better to have leaderless groups? And unfacilitated groups, priestess-less rituals - spontaneously created, of course - and teacher-less classes...well, maybe not. Another natural law: all groups have leaders. A group without a leader will be led by the person with the strongest agenda, the most pressing issue, the most charismatic personality, or the person who is most able to take action. Able to take action, that's the definition of power.

If a group claims to be leaderless, leadership issues can't be addressed. If a group is led by the person with the most pressing agenda or with the most engaging complaint, it will always focus on dissatisfactions and proposed changes. When a group spends more time structuring itself than doing what it was formed to do, notice who is leading the group (or the leader).

What is the alternative? A group can choose a leader who chooses to serve the community or the intention of the group. That leader can then develop the skills that leadership requires, the skills that enable her to serve the group, the skills that enable him to serve the intention that formed the group. Leadership is then based on being effective. Being effective depends on the leader's ability to listen to and learn from that great teacher...the community.

Here are other questions that I found inside Catherine's pregnant inquiry, "Are there myths that focus on community rather than on elevating individuals within the community?" What is the purpose of a hero anyway? How can leaders have the glamour and charisma necessary to provide powerful work without using that glamour to accrue privilege and exemption from community agreements? What is a healthy leader? What is a healthy community?

For myths to support community - common unity - we must first figure out what a healthy community looks like. How do community members treat each other? How are

issues resolved? How are needs addressed? Are power and authority openly discussed? Do community leaders live within the agreements or are they exempt from them? What about their friends? Are the expectations and agreements different for the leaders' friends? And speaking of agreements and expectations, are they overt or covert? Are different levels of involvement addressed? Does an individual's level of involvement affect her realm of influence? Can the community acknowledge that equality isn't necessarily fair and fair doesn't always mean equal?

Power, authority, hierarchy...there's a group of unpopular words to throw into a discussion about community. And, to use the word myth here in a common form not commonly used, there are plenty of myths about those three words. Most of those myths tell us that those three are bad. Power corrupts. Fight authority. Hierarchy is the antitheses of equality, the opposite of equal value.

Now we have one of those Emperor-Empress domestic conflicts. In all groups, some people have more power or influence than others. Some people have more authority than others. Hierarchies - levels of authority - exist in all groups. Denying power, authority and hierarchy prevents a group from discussing these dynamics, not from having them.

Hierarchy

Does hierarchy come with an assumption that a community or organization has levels of importance, and that importance is an indication of value? What if this assumption is dropped? Start here...everyone is of value. And everyone is not equally valuable to every process. Everyone is valuable and not everyone is equally invested in the work or committed to the group. Now *that* is a potentially inflammatory revelation. And yet, if we are going to value diversity, we need to acknowledge our differences. If we can talk about our differences, then we can support each other in the task, project or process that is best suited to those differences. Everyone is valuable and everyone is valuable in a different way. Some of us drum, some sing, some tell stories. Some of us work well in large groups, some work well in small groups, some work well alone.

We can know that everyone is valuable and still have a hierarchy. In our work at Diana's Grove, we look at a hierarchy based on commitment and involvement. The greater your investment in the work, the more power you have in shaping the work. Someone who comes to the Grove every month has more influence in decision making than the person who comes once a year or one time only. And the person who comes once a year or one time only might have a wonderful insight or suggestion. Those who are a part of the ongoing work have the responsibility and authority to integrate that idea and make it a part of our program or process.

We want to sincerely support the choice to be minimally involved in our work and our community and, also, empower those who are doing the work monthly to have more influence in creating the structure they are asked to work within. It is a hierarchy...of commitment and investment.

Hierarchy comes from the same root as Hiero-phant. It was first used to establish a ranking of angels, an order for spiritual beings, to let us know which ones were closer to

God. The original meaning of hierarchy set divinity away from the common person, and gave a chain of command and a set of protocols that would enable the word to reach the masses. The spiritual connotation is no longer a part of this word but, if you want to understand its hidden power, reclaim it. Every healthy and effective organization, group, and community has a structure that gives more authority to those who give their time to the work than to those who have a casual commitment. But...hierarchy. Are those in charge seen as having direct access to the divine? Are they considered omnipotent? Do they listen to the angels rather than to the people they serve? Does divine knowledge come through a few or is the innate wisdom within each person seen as valuable?

Observe the communities and organizations in which you are involved. Notice how hierarchies are formed. Is the level of authority based on commitment, involvement, work or risk? Is it based on skill or talent? Or is it based on desire for power, association with the powerful, or political maneuvering? If the workers and the risk-takers don't have a part in decision making, who does and why? Do those who want to make a greater commitment and contribution have a way to enter the community's *body of influence*? If not, how are contributions of time, labor, talent and skill used and acknowledged?

I have found that it isn't possible to eliminate a hierarchy, nor is it healthy. But the hierarchy *can* eliminate the lower-archy. Those with more power can refuse privilege. They can learn from the community and treat all community members as their teachers. They can strive to create effective process. They can uphold agreements, listen to those they serve, respond to what they hear, and change structure to meet the needs and requests of the group.

Power and Authority

There *are* myths that support healthy communities, but how those myths are lived by their tellers is how the health of the community will rise or fall. Leaders go first to where they want the group to be.

Two great myths of community come quickly to mind: Communism and Democracy. Both are myths of community...and when the leaders and tellers of those myths don't support the values, the myths become hypocrisy and propaganda. Even consensus, a process that comes out of the belief that every person's perspective is valuable and adds to an understanding of the whole, can be an empty form shaped by politics and powerful personalities.

My question is: What is a healthy community? Once we answer that, then what is the role and responsibility of a leader in that healthy community? Then, what myths enable all community members - leaders, teachers, committed members and new members - to be more fully who they are? What myths encourage each person to speak for himself? What myths encourage healthy dialog, healthy process for decision-making, and opportunities for the characters - all of them - to change reality in significant ways?

I have heard that a community or an organization is only as healthy as its leaders. And which myths, what classic stories, lead individuals into greater personal health? These are the myths that take us on the *hero's journey*.

That first quote, “It has been said that the greatest teacher is the Sanga, the community,” is a key to the kind of leadership that I admire. As you observe communities, what tells you that the leaders, teachers, organizers and facilitators are listening to and learning from the community? Are they learning about themselves? Do they learn about the structures they create, about the dynamics that serve the group? Do they learn from the group during daily interaction? Are they able to gather information from the group’s actions and interactions? Is feedback a form that is completed at the end of an event, or are the group’s requests, issues, reactions and responses in the moment heard as feedback?

None of this is as simple as it first sounds. How do we learn to listen to a group and not just the most verbal people within the group? How do we hear what is said in non-verbal languages? To learn from the community, leaders must have a relationship with the community...a personal relationship. An eye-to-eye relationship. An authentic relationship. To have an authentic relationship, issues of glamour, power, projection and transference must be openly discussed. Issue of sexual ethics, personal power, and individual privilege have to be openly addressed.

The Paradox

Effective leaders listen. They create structures that enable community members to discuss their needs, fears and concerns. And...for a group or a process to have integrity, it must have form and structure that serve its intention. It can’t be recreated and reshaped to meet every request, preference and desire.

Leaderless Groups

Isn’t the answer to break the leadership paradigm and have leaderless groups? Yes...if all group members are equally involved, equally invested in the intention of the group, equally skilled, and personally prepared to handle equally the responsibilities of leadership. When that is the situation, you have a leaderful group rather than a leaderless group.

What are a leader’s responsibilities in a group? In the simplest terms, they are to:

- ✦ Uphold the group’s intention for being together.
- ✦ Create healthy and inclusive structures, structures that enable each person in the group to have a place in the group.
- ✦ Uphold the group’s agreements.
- ✦ Assure the safety for all group members.

These goals invoke a different leader than when leadership is defined as desire for power and influence. Do the people in the group or community want to take this role and assume these responsibilities? If they do, what have they done to prepare themselves for the work? How have they earned the group’s trust?

The first universal that I want to share might be the most difficult for you to accept. A safe group, a healthy group, has a leader. Here's why: if it doesn't, then no one is responsible for the group's safety. Here is the other reason: there are no leaderless groups. Groups have overt leaders, acknowledged leaders, or they have covert, unacknowledged leaders.

Every group has a leader. If a group doesn't have a designated leader who is willing to be committed to the group's well-being, the group will be "led" by the person with the strongest agenda. The strongest agenda.... Yes, that might be the agenda of the person who formed the group and is committed to its well-being. A group can have effective covert leadership but, if leadership is covert, it is difficult to address leadership structure and issues.

The strongest agenda might also belong to the person who has the largest need or the juiciest issue. Then you will have a problem-based group. If one person or one person's need dominates your group each month, the group is being led by that person. Leaders go first to where they want the group to be. Acknowledging leadership and designating responsibility is a simple way to set a process for solution in place.

Responsibility = Authority = Power = Impact = Responsibility

If you are Responsible, you need the Authority to fulfill that responsibility. If you have Authority, you are Powerful. And if you are Powerful, you make an impact on others. If you Impact others, you are Responsible for that impact. When you act responsibly in your use of power, and when you take responsibility for the impact you have on others, you gain more authority. That is the spiral of leadership.

Authority and power are scary words, but empower is a popular word. Yet, how can we help others to be powerful if we aren't willing to have or acknowledge our own power? Empower literally means "to delegate authority." To delegate authority you must be willing to have authority.

The first issue a group must tackle is leadership. As a group member who chooses not to be the leader, how can you give someone the authority to serve you, without abandoning your personal power, choice and responsibility? In a group, we are all responsible for the group's process and for the effect we have on that process. The key, for me, is that the group leader shapes the group and the group leader's role is shaped by the group. It is an exchange where all people are responsible. We are as responsible for our leaders as our leaders are for our well-being.

I like to think of my chiropractor. I empower him to manipulate me. I give him the authority to adjust my spine. And...I am responsible for my own health. I have the authority to give him authority. So it is with a group process. Leaders are granted authority by the group. Using that authority well is the Emperor's Challenge.

Now, you might want to question whether this idea of mine is true. Do all groups have leaders? My suggestion...observe the groups that you are in. Think back on the groups that you have been in. What happened?

Here are some ideas. Observe the groups and communities that you are in to see whether these ideas are true.

- ✦ All groups have leaders. The leader might be overt, acknowledged as the leader by the group. A class has a teacher, a designated leader who is often paid to serve the group. A therapeutic group often has a designated and paid leader. Many work groups have a designated leader, a person who is responsible for the product or outcome of the group's intention.
- ✦ A covert leader is the driving force, the magnetic force, within the group who hasn't been acknowledged by the group as its leader or as the responsible party. In a "leaderless" group, notice who the group members look to for a final decision. Notice who starts the meeting, who closes it, and who sets the agenda. If this is frequently the same person, your group has a leader.
- ✦ In a leaderless group, leaders will lead...they will either lead with others toward the group's designated intention or they will pull against the fiber of intention and authority. How can the magnetic people in your group be of service to the group and the intention?
- ✦ Overt leadership can be shared or rotated. The person who is acknowledged as being responsible for the process can change from meeting to meeting, but effective leadership requires those who accept a leadership role to be committed to the work and the group, as well as the opportunity to lead.
- ✦ Covert leadership can also rotate from gathering to gathering. It will also be shared by the group members who are the most invested in shaping or reshaping the group's focus.
- ✦ Leaderless-ness and covert leadership don't support equality within a group. If equality and the needs of all members are values, the group needs to consciously create a process that supports these values and empower a leader or a leadership team to uphold them.
- ✦ A leaderless group will have power struggles until an overt or covert leader is chosen.
- ✦ All groups have ground rules and behavioral expectations. Healthy groups discuss their expectations of each other, of their leaders and of group members. They discuss those expectations openly.
- ✦ Boundaries and agreements provide safety, but only if they are explained and maintained. Only if boundaries and agreements are overtly shared with all group members, and all members are accountable for honoring those agreements, can the group be safe.
- ✦ Someone in your group will test the boundaries.

As Daedalus, the Magician in *The Labyrinth and the Minotaur*, said, "I am not a prophet but I can see the form beneath the robes of fate."

Leader is one of those words that we, at the Grove, have worked hard to reclaim. A leader isn't a commander. She isn't the person who tells others what to do, nor does she shape the group to fit her own needs. A leader is responsible for the group; she acts in service to the group.

A leader, to us, is someone who “goes first to where they want the group to be.” If you want your group to be involved, then be involved. If you want your group to meet consistently, be consistent. If you want a group to be enthusiastic, be enthusiastic and create the group based on the interests of those who are in it.

If you want depth in your group, be willing to risk. Be willing to share the deep places in your own soul first. Be willing to stop harmful interactions and unhealthy process by saying that it doesn't work for you. With that definition, here are some ideas for structuring a group.

Leadership can be shared but it can't be equally assigned. Leadership isn't a wand that can be passed. Here's why: a leader has to earn the respect of her group by serving her group, by being accountable for her actions and sustaining the group's intention. Skill and respect can't be passed so that everyone has a turn.

Back to hierarchy.... Over the years we have learned that we, at the Grove, are a hierarchy. It took us years to admit to that obvious structure. We are a hierarchy of commitment and intention. At the Grove, those who give their lives to this work have more authority than those who attend regularly. Those who attend regularly have more authority than those who attend occasionally. And...all are respected for the levels of involvement and commitment that they decide are right for them.

When a group is willing to honestly discuss leadership, they will eventually discuss their individual and differing needs, intentions and reasons for coming together. They will discover that they have different levels of commitment and want different levels of involvement. Regardless of the level of involvement, all group members are valuable.

Every person's needs matter, but the group can't meet all needs. Every person is valuable. Leadership isn't the way a group affirms personal value. I can be a valuable leader in one group and a valuable participant in another. My level of involvement and authority doesn't define me; it defines my commitment to the principles that create the group. If I take a leadership role, I do so because serving that group serves me. If I don't take a leadership role, my knowledge of leadership will enable me to be a more supportive participant. The most supportive participants are often the most effective group leaders. If those supportive participants are empowered by the group, the group will be well led.

We suggest that, in your groups, those who are the most involved have the most influence. We suggest that those who choose not to be highly involved grant authority to those who are. The person who puts five hours a month into making the group vital and successful should have more say about the process than the person who comes occasionally. It would seem that this principle should be fairly obvious, but desire to empower and respect everyone blinded us to this simple truth for a long time. Without a hierarchy of commitment and involvement, the least committed or least cooperative person is often the most influential person. She or he has the greatest impact on the time that the group spends together.

So simple...and, like a labyrinth or a hero's journey, it is the journey of a lifetime. Taking on this endeavor is the mystery of the quest. That quest - to be in relationship without

compromising authenticity. To create effective models for leadership and healthy communities that truly support diversity, individuality and choice.



A Process for Healthy Communities: The Hierarchy of Responsibility

1) The Foundation: Self-responsibility. This is the principle, the value and the agreement that will sustain the four values that follow. The success of this hierarchy, like all hierarchies, is dependent on the foundation. Here is the mystery: the bottom level, the *lower-archy*, supports the hierarchy. When a community builds a structure that ends in elitism or has leaders who are exempt from the community agreements, change the foundation. The hierarchy that I present here is a structure of values, agreements and responsibilities. When this structure applies to all community members, it can provide a model for a healthy, leaderful group.

This hierarchy of principles, like the Tarot, doesn't indicate that the higher layers are more important than the lower layers. It assumes that the higher levels are dependent on the foundation beneath them. We need to master the first principle to effectively use the second. When we are capable of using the second, we can effectively incorporate the third. And, as in the Tarot, when we build a healthy community, all of the principles are ever present. This model has made the mystery of healthy community more accessible for me. I hope it will give you ideas to play with as a leader, a community member and a community builder.

The structure begins with self-responsibility. When the structure collapses, I find that each layer collapse back into the layer before the apparent problem or crisis. Often, when community collapses, I find myself right back at the foundation. Self-responsibility. A healthy community begins with an agreement that each member will take care of herself; each will be supported and valued when he is self-responsible. Community members are encouraged to take action in their own behalf. They are supported when they set their limits. Group process and ritual design support this value.

“To each according to their need and from each according to their ability” is a very complex sociological statement. Self-responsibility assumes that group members or community members enter the group with a clear understanding of the group’s structure and expectations of its members. Self-responsibility and the pattern I am presenting enable each person to fulfill their agreements and take care of themselves. And being responsible for the community that you are a part of is also an aspect of self-responsibility. Self-responsibility can be confused with self-obsession or insatiable self-care...but it’s not the same. “In service to each other, we all are free” was the motto carved on King Arthur’s round table.

Self-responsible requires self-understanding. If I want the menu changed so my friend can have her favorite dish, I might be responding to my desire but I am being responsible for what I assume someone else wants. Not only have I denied my friend the right to be self-responsible, I am creating a triangular interaction. My friend doesn’t have the opportunity to speak for herself. She isn’t talking to the kitchen. She can’t respond to alternative suggestions.

If I don’t like an agreement that I made, or one that is part of the group’s principles, breaking that agreement might fulfill the *self* part of this structure, but it doesn’t fill the *responsible* criterion. Addressing my desire and exploring options is taking care of *myself* and it is *responsible*. If the structure doesn’t allow me to meet my needs, then it might be self-responsible for me to leave the community. I might decide to stay and fill my need in a different structure.

Self-responsible: self *and* responsible; both words have equal weight. A self-responsible action isn’t harmful to the self. A self-responsible choice doesn’t abnegate a community member’s responsibility to the community or the process. You can responsibly change agreements; you can’t responsibly violate them. You can responsibly disappoint another community member; you can’t responsibly violate or discredit another person.

Self-responsible action requires self-knowledge and self-awareness. It requires you to have a sense of your values. Self-responsibility can require you to support your values and act for long-term rewards, rather than to make choices based on immediate comfort and gratification. Addressing an issue directly might not be the most comfortable short-term choice but denial or avoidance isn’t an effective long-term solution to interpersonal issues.

The essential leadership skill that lives with self-responsibility is the ability to effectively communicate. Effective communication: the ability to listen, the ability to speak so others can hear you (without shaming, blaming, inviting defense or feeding dissension), the ability to speak directly, the ability to self-reference and talk about yourself rather than others. These skills...years of care-filled practice.... The intention to communicate in ways that develop trust and effective relationships is a part of the foundation of a healthy community.

2) Keep your agenda forward. Ask for what you want and need; remain responsible for your own well-being. If I tell you what I need or want, my telling doesn’t transfer the responsibility for my need from me to you. This second step simply asks us to communicate our needs and desires and remain responsible for them. Love and friendship don’t mean that you will make my need as important to you as it is to me. I

can't say it once and assume that you are now responsible for my need. I can't expect that, because I told you once, you are responsible for remembering my want, my need, forever...for even for an hour, a day. If I tell my fellow board members that it is very important to me to talk about the next event at our Wednesday meeting, I am still responsible for initiating the discussion.

3) Generosity of Spirit: Remain open to others. Act with kindness and live with compassion. Generosity of spirit and our cornerstone "*thinking well of others*" express the same value. Both are dependent on "thinking well of yourself." I don't believe we can be truly generous with others until we are generous with ourselves. Often, this intention is confused with creating positive myths and stories about ourselves and others. "Oh, Sue did that because she was tired...not feeling well, felt left out"...and on it goes. I can come up with a thousand excuses for Sue (and for myself).

Making up excuses and positive myths isn't generous. It isn't kind. Those stories, just like the less-flattering ones, leave Sue out of the story about her. She doesn't have the opportunity to tell you about what is going on with her. She doesn't even know that her behavior is distressing. She has no opportunity to change, apologize, explain or heal the situation. Generosity of spirit means that I am willing to extend myself to have a relationship with Sue. I might say, "Hey, Sue, what is going on? You seem upset or distressed." You might say, "Sue, stop. I really need to talk about how we are approaching this project because I don't want to continue until we find a way to work together." Generosity of spirit: include people in the relationship that you have with them.

Generosity of spirit and thinking well of others require us to communicate compassionately, ask rather than make up stories - positive or negative, flattering or condemning. Assume that people want to know the impact they make on you and let them know when things are working well and when they aren't. Being in an eye-to-eye relationship with each other - an I-to-I relationship - is generous. Dismissing you through story, explanation and projection isn't.

I am not saying that generosity of spirit means that you address every feeling, annoyance and disturbance. That wouldn't be generous. Generosity implies a larger vision. It implies the ability to determine what needs to be addressed and what is a passing moment of irritation. It implies the ability to discern a single incident from a pattern of behavior. To be generous, I need to know how my feelings differ from your behavior. If something happens and it affects my moment, it is passing. If it affects my relationship with you, I need to talk with you - now - about the incident. If I bring something up in my own mind a month later and use it to determine how I will be with you, then that issue wasn't passing - it didn't "pass." I need to talk to you about it.

In sorting this conundrum, I find that single incidents are passing. If something happens repeatedly, it is a pattern. It needs to be addressed. You have the right to know the issues, fears and assumptions that are shaping my relationship with you. If we are going to have a relationship, I need to let you be there with me. If I don't talk to you directly, I will have a relationship with my past hurts and assumptions about you. I will call my unresolved issues "you." Generosity of spirit leads to the next value.

4. Direct Communication. How can such simple and direct words be filled with misunderstanding? Perhaps it is the words, and the social history of those who speak and those who listen. *Direct communication* begins with speaking directly to the person you are talking about, to the person with whom you have something to discuss. Direct, in this structure, means *directly to*.

Direct is, at times, confused with blunt. Blunt can be confused with blurt. Saying whatever is on your mind to anyone who happens to be present isn't direct communication. Saying whatever is on your mind to the person you need to have a conversation with might be direct but does what you say and how you say it rest on that first step, which includes effective communication?

When direct communication enters the process after the first three, it rests on a foundation of self-responsibility and effective communication. It fills an agreement to bring up issues and address concerns. It rests on a value for generosity, building relationships and thinking well of ourselves and each other.

I often ask myself, *why am I having this conversation?* What do I want? What is my intention? And then, how can this conversation serve that intention? Do I want to address an issue or a concern? Do I want to let you know that your behavior was hurtful to me? Do I want to tell you that you did something wrong? If I do, what will your intention be as you listen to me? How would I address the same issue if my intention were to find a different approach to a situation, problem or task that doesn't seem to be working well? When I know what I want to talk about and why I am talking, I talk directly to the person or people involved. I talk directly about the subject we are discussing.

Here are my Rules of Engagement: I talk about myself. *I felt... I was upset when...* When I talk to you about your behavior, I talk about specific actions and not your intentions or motives. I tell you what I perceive, not who you are. My request: don't tell me who I am, what I am, how I feel, or what my intentions and motives are. Tell me about you, ask me about me. I ask for what I want in specific, doable actions. "I want the construction tools put away before dinner," rather than "I want you to act as if the place matters to you."

Direct vs. directive. When we first began our family discussion at the Grove about direct vs. directive communication, I was very aware that a directive style of speaking is often not easy to hear. We don't like to be told what to do when we are in a trance; we also don't like to be told what to do in a family discussion or in a business meeting. Effective planning invites everyone to be a part of the design and to have personal authority regarding their participation.

And...at times, a directive statement serves the group, individuals and the intention. As with priestessing and teaching, different approaches are required in different situations. The way we use the word, priestessing is leading people to their own discovery. If my intention is personal growth, then the situation requires priestessing - leading people to discover their own wisdom, feelings and solutions. We *teach* when we present a specific skill: *Here is how you hold a frame drum. Here is how you make this stroke.* Know which approach serves the group and let the group know which approach you will be using, so they can choose the experience that they want.

There are times when being directive “Call the dogs (a truck is coming)” is appropriate. There are times when a management structure is the most effective and healthy process for the group and its individual members. The head cook says, “We have thirty minutes to complete dinner for fifty.” Based on her knowledge of her crew’s abilities and interests, she assigns the tasks at hand.

I once heard a person tell my favorite philosopher, Patricia Sun, that she was tired of always being the one who had to bring up issues and address concerns in her relationships. Patricia Sun said, “If you are the one who sees it, you are the one who has to address it. You can’t expect someone else to address what you see.” Although this insight fits with the second principle, keeping your agenda forward, I put it here because it has to do with responsibility, authority and personal power - those Emperor issues. It is hard to talk about authority without talking about power. Conversations about power often lead to conversations about privilege. Let’s talk about the privilege of not using your authority, of not using your power - your ability to act.

Refusing to address an issue or speak up when an agreement is being violated is privileged behavior. Anytime I say, “Let someone else address that issue,” I am considering myself entitled to pass the burden of integrity on to some other authority. I have to ask myself why I believe I have the right to make a misunderstanding, a violation of agreements, or a blatant unkindness someone else’s task. If I am present during the encounter, why is it someone else’s job to address the issue? I find this to be a good question for those of us who strive not to unconsciously assume privilege.

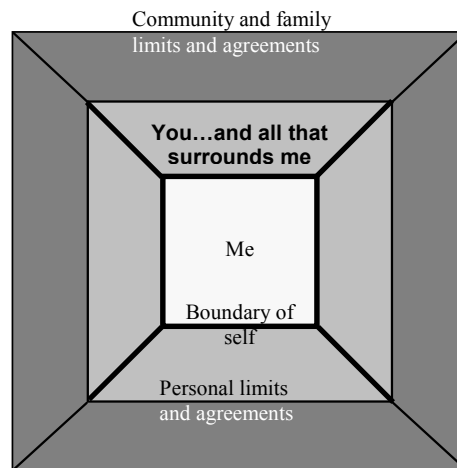
Direct, directive, effect, effective, intention, intentional.... Here is direct: talk to the person who you want to talk about, know your intention when you begin a difficult communication, know your desired outcome, speak so the person you are speaking to can listen, and listen as much or more than you talk. Be directive when it serves the intention and the group. Being directive when you should be direct won’t reduce the amount of time you spend in conversation. If being directive takes away each person’s right to contribute or be self-responsible, you will be talking about your effect on others, rather than how to approach the task at hand. All of this leads to a 5th principle.

The first four layers are the first four cards. The Magician: self - self responsibility and effective communication. The Priestess: exchange - keep your own interests present while being in relationship with others; advocate your own agenda so others can advocate theirs. If you expect me to stand for what you want, you are asking me to assume your need as my own...and instead of my own. The Empress - expansion - generosity of spirit. The Emperor: direct communication. What is the 5th, the Hierophant at the top of the Hierarchy?

5. Think holistically. In healthy communities, leaders (and therefore community members) support the whole. If leaders don’t embody this principle, community members won’t. If any part of the whole is damaged, the whole is damaged. I can’t complain about the food in my own restaurant. I can’t complain about the management in my own company. I can’t publicly find fault with the organization that I am representing and not address my issues with the organization. If I do, I will destroy the public’s confidence in my organization and in me. I can’t lobby for change among those attending an event, rather than bring up my needs in a staff meeting.

Simply put, I can't disregard healthy process and respectful behavior and have a healthy, respectful community. Leaders go first to where they want the group to be. That statement is more than an ideal, it is a law of group dynamics. Ask yourself the impact that your behavior would have on your community if ten people followed your lead. What will happen when those ten engage ten more? You might say, *I'm off the hook. I'm not a leader.* If you integrate and act from the first four principles presented, you will be a leader. Responsibility = Authority. Authority = Power (the ability to act). Power = Impact. And Impact = Responsibility.

Boundaries, Limits and Agreements



The five principles just discussed are dependent on the above graphic. To be self-responsible, we need to understand self, and where *self* ends and *other* begins. The word boundary has many interchangeable meanings. For the sake of this conversation, boundary will refer to that line where I end and you begin; the membrane between me and you. Personal limits and agreements are the edges of my power, influence, and of what I am able to do and am willing to accept. That third *boundary* is the one we make around our communities and group. It is the defining edge we make by making the limits and accepting the agreements that define a community.

For the sake of metaphor, let's look at The Emperor card in the tarot. The Emperor is that character in the center of the card. I am going to give him an artificial personal boundary. Let's consider the edge of the square box that is his throne to be his personal boundary. Of course, in real life, he gets up and walks around. His boundaries go with him. Your boundaries go with you. There is a line between you and the rest of the world. You are on the inside of the line. Other people are on the outside of that line. What they do is about them. What you do is about you. You can only be self responsible if you know where self ends and other begins. I can only keep my agenda forward if I know that my agenda is my concern. And your concerns are yours because you aren't me and I'm not you. I can support you as you put your agenda forward. Putting it forward for you doesn't support you, nor is it self-responsible. Me. You. There is a line between us,

and that line enables us to have a better relationship. It doesn't sacrifice intimacy, it enables it to be authentic.

If I am mad, that is about me. My anger gives you information about me, it doesn't give you information about you. It gives you information about the impact of my behavior on you. If I make a request or ask you whether you want to do something, your answer is inside your boundary. My urgency, enthusiasm, or negativity isn't yours; it is outside of your boundary. You are inside your boundary. You can decide whether you want to join me or want to say *no*, but my feelings are separate from your feelings...even if you feel the same as I do. When you feel the same as I do, we are two different people who feel the same feeling. We aren't of one mind and body. Can you feel the history of country-western music rise up in distress?

This first boundary means I can be upset and you are still who you are. I can find you adorable and magical and that, too, is more about me than you. You are still who you are. I can ask you whether you have completed a project that is due and you can say yes or no. Your answer gives me information about the project. You are still the person inside the boundary. Your boundary hasn't reset itself to include the project, so that the state of the project determines your worth. There is a *you* - an emperor -, inside the four square reality of your throne. The first boundary is the line between self and *not self*, between self and the others, projects, requests, moods and feelings that surround you. There is a boundary between you and the words that are said to you and about you. You are affected by the world outside of your boundary, but you are not determined by those exterior activities. There is a boundary. What affects you doesn't determine who you are. It doesn't affect your essential worth.

Using the tarot image, the next boundary is the edge of the card. That boundary describes the Emperor's personal limits. He can be your favorite card and there is a limit to his power. Limits can describe the ends of our physical, emotional, mythic and intellectual abilities. Regardless of my desires and the depth of my caring, there are still 24 hours in a day. I can only work effectively for ten hours at a time. I still need sleep. I can only think of so many things at a time. And no amount of intention can turn tomorrow into today. I have physical limits determined by the strength of my body and the constructs of time. I have emotional limits; limits to the amount of stress I can bear and care I can give. I have intellectual limits; I cannot understand what I haven't developed a context for. I have spiritual or mythic limitations. I can only generate energy for a specific amount of time; I can only believe what I find to be believable. I can only trust what I have learned is trustworthy.

There are limits set by natural law. I might be able to make you do something; I can't make you feel good about doing it. I might win an argument; that won't make you agree with me. I can't tell you how to feel, think or perceive the world. I can't tell you how to perceive me. If I want our relationship to be different, I can change myself. I can change our agreements, but I can't change you. Limits. The Emperor is a powerful card, but he ends at the edges of his own realm.

The third edge - let's call it the structure of the Tarot deck. There are 22 Major Arcana cards. There are four suites. Each card has its own Realm of Authority and they work together in groups or constellations. And, of course, they all speak in "I" statements.

The third *boundary* is the community agreements, the agreements that we make to accept and abide by certain limits when we enter or form a community. If we say that Diana's Grove is drug and alcohol free, you accept that agreement when you come here. Bringing wine is not negotiable. It isn't a part of this deck. And there is a world beyond the deck, beyond these community agreements. Our agreements don't reach beyond the Grove. Think of a larger me/you. This agreement doesn't imply that wine is bad. It only defines what is done inside this community's edge. Boundary. Inside - the community. Outside - not the community.

Communities have many agreements. Not all of them can be clearly communicated in advance. Expectations have to be addressed respectfully as issues arise. Dinner is served at 6:30. It is only available for an hour. If you miss dinner, we will prepare a plate for you. And...we will ask you to come to dinner when the meal is served or ask a friend or cabin-mate to fix you a plate. We won't change or extend the meal time (because the kitchen staff has limits). I find that I can respect a boundary when I understand the reason that it exists. I can respect a boundary if...

- ✦ the community that I enter has boundaries that serve the whole,
- ✦ there are alternative ways I can meet my needs,
- ✦ there is a process that enables me to address my needs,
- ✦ there is room within the structure for individual needs,
- ✦ boundaries and agreement apply to all members;
- ✦ and, although leadership carries a different set of stresses and needs, leaders aren't exempt from community agreements and limits.

When community agreements aren't upheld, the community doesn't have boundaries. If the structures that were created to provide emotional safety are negotiable, then the group isn't safe.

Does that mean that a healthy community isn't flexible about community agreements and that rigidity is the answer? Rarely. What, then, is the answer? It might be *thinking within the box*. It is meeting the intention of the agreements and supporting self-responsible solutions. The intention of dinner is to feed the community. There are ways that each person can be fed within the meal schedule. If I focus on being fed rather than changing structure, I can meet my needs without violating agreements or asking that the structure be changed for me. Some agreements don't have solutions *within the box*. Our policy regarding drugs and alcohol doesn't have an *inside the box* alternative. And we respect any individual's right to decide that she doesn't want to spend a weekend or week inside our box.

Self, limits of strength and authority, and community agreements; within the boundary of community, all people matter. A community is a communal self, an organism made up of many individual selves. Just as my body can't disregard my feelings, and my feelings can't decide to shun my intellect because they don't want to hear a particular fact...within the membrane of community, we are interdependent and interwoven. What affects one, affects the whole. All problems are my problem, but...they aren't all about me or because of me. They don't require me to fix them; they do require me to act with

integrity and compassion. They require me to be self-responsible and to communicate effectively, to stand for my own needs and point of view while supporting you to do the same. They require me to be generous, to speak directly and address the issues that I encounter.

When everyone acts from her or his own power, we have a model for a healthy community.

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Why do we do it? Why do we rescue dogs?

by Cynthia Jones
- Mystery School 2004 -

I have been asked **why do we do it?** Here's why.

Dogs are an aspect of the wild that is ever-present in our lives and constantly at our sides. Nature embodied, how do we treat you? How do we care for you? What is our responsibility to you? Current experts say that dogs domesticated themselves. I believe that is true. Long ago, we accepted the dog's companionship and help. We developed a relationship with a wild creature who thought well enough of us to come to our fire, serve us in the hunt, tend our flocks and allow us to name her pups. In the form of the dog, the wisdom and keen senses of the wild joined us.

We need that wild spirit in our increasingly synthetic, indoor lives. And now, the wild needs us. In the form of the dogs that we have domesticated, she needs us. In the form of the forests that require our protection, she needs us. In the way we tell nature's story, she needs us.

Members of our community expressed surprise and concern when they learned about the cost of caring for our rescue dogs. Me too! If a dog owner should anticipate an expenditure of \$60 a month and we care for between 25 and 40 dogs...yes! That is a lot of money. The maximum number of dogs that we can house and care for is 25...and yes, if a litter is born or found - we may have as many as 40 dogs. The rescue work that we do consumes our time, energy and financial resources. You might wonder why we do it. Here is why:

I believe that each one of us is called to do what stands before us to be done. Some of you are called to stand up for your political beliefs. Some of you devote your time and your resources to your church or your spiritual work. Others of you give your time to volunteer and service work. Some of you, like me, care for abandoned dogs, cats and other animals...just not at home or not so many at home. Like you, we do what we can. Our land and our staff enable us to do what stands before us; we take in abandoned dogs.

We live in an area where people drop their dogs on the road and drive on. Each one of our dogs was found in a situation where we had to decide whether we would respond to that abandoned creature or turn our heads and walk on, knowing that the dog we did not take would die a slow, lonely and terrifying death in the woods that surround us. We choose to pick up the dog and give him or her medical care, food and lots of love. In order to continue our work, we need to find homes for the dogs that we have taken in. We would love your help in placing those dogs with people who are seeking animal companions.

We don't seek out the dogs that we save. In most cases, they didn't seek us out either. They simply stand before us, creatures of circumstances whose fate is coincidentally placed in our hands. At times we get a phone call. We have a brief "family meeting" that goes like this..."Who votes to let the pregnant mother die?" Maybe it is the way we present the situation to each other; I don't know. But here we are, thirty-nine dogs later.

In exchange for our time and care, we get to share our lives with creatures who are committed to personal healing. The dogs that we rescue, recover. They forgive. They love and they trust even when their personal experience tells them it is foolish to do either.

A frightened puppy cowers in my arms and believes that he will be safe. The last person who held him placed him on the side of the road and drove off. And yet, I am forgiven for that sin. I am seen as a solution by a creature whose birth was the result of someone's neglect, a creature whose life was an extension of that neglect. I am compelled to live up to the hope that lives in a lost dog's eyes. That is why I do it. That is why we do it. We do it because it is before us.

We live in a very poor area. There are no low-cost spay and neuter clinics in Bunker. If a pet owner wants to take a dog to a local humane society, the closest one is 45 minutes away. When seeking a humane alternative to caring for a lost dog, we have contacted all of the shelters within a five-hour radius without finding a "no kill or low kill" shelter that has an opening.

As I thought about this month's theme, I wanted to talk about a dog's need for companionship, a dog's innate and all consuming need to be with...to be with you, to be with other dogs, to be free in the world around her. But, instead, I am talking about a more primary need, the need for food and the care, often medical, that counters neglect. I believe that alienation is the root and heart of the kind of neglect that we see. Not just a neglectful owner, but a neglectful world. A dog on the road? Not my problem. Not my fault. It is easy to blame the person who didn't take their dog to a shelter. It is easy to blame the person who didn't have their dog spayed or neutered. It is easy to blame the person who, just one year earlier, didn't spay the abandoned dog's grandmother. Blame is easy, it is alienation's pup. Alienation - tell me, how do we *fix* that dog?

Alienation. We are alienated when we think the fear and misery of an abandoned animal is someone else's responsibility. It is easy to blame when we are alienated, when we consider ourselves separate from the person who left a puppy or a pregnant dog on the side of road. Blame is an easy road, but it seems to go in a circle. It has no end. Connect. Share the burden of responsibility. Join the solution. That is the only way we will solve the problem...no matter which problem we are addressing. The number of abandoned and euthanized pets has decreased in the last ten years. Here is my request: rather than lose yourself in the abyss that holds the problem, look into the eyes of the need that stands before you. Respond to that which stands before you. Be it dog rescue or volunteer work, social action or speaking for a political cause, connect with the world before you. Do what is yours to do.

If you are called to Dog Rescue but you don't have the place and space that enables you to take a dog, consider helping us continue our rescue work. **You can: refer** potential dog owners to us. **You can: sponsor** a Diana's Grove Dog until a rightful home has been found.

Dogs@Dianasgrove.com
573-689-2400
PO Box 159, Salem MO 65560
www.dianasgrove.com

To help us care for our rescue dogs, you can:

Adopt a Dog! Or....

- ✦ **Sponsor a dog**
- ✦ **Make a one time donation for general dog care.**
- ✦ **Add to our Spay/Neuter fund - Our spay/neuter costs are often over \$500 a month.** Help us be part of the solution.
- ✦ **Donate to our “Give Life a Chance” emergency medical fund.**

We are currently collecting for a \$1,750 vet bill. On August 15, a litter of 14 day old puppies - their eyes had just opened - went critical. Two babies spent the night in intensive care at the Small Animal Hospital in Columbia. Mom and all the puppies required treatment. On August 16, Mom and the puppies went to Houston Veterinary Hospital for a 3 day stay. We are thrilled to say Mom and pups are all doing great. Time, attention and your help is all it takes to **Give Life a Chance**.

At 2005 publication of The Bones, not only are all these August 2004 puppies and their mom doing great, they have – all 10 of them – been adopted by loving families...one even flew to Boston!

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**And now,
another year....**

What will we invent, create, conceptualize this year that becomes part of all of the following mystery Schools? I don't know but the possibilities are...

Endless.

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