

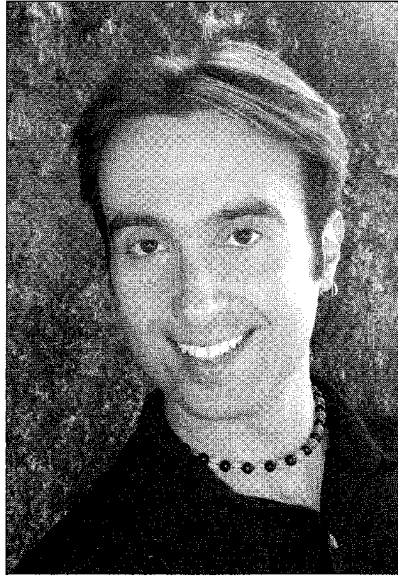
SONS of the GODDESS

A YOUNG MAN'S GUIDE TO WICCA



CHRISTOPHER PENCZAK

SONS
of the
GODDESS

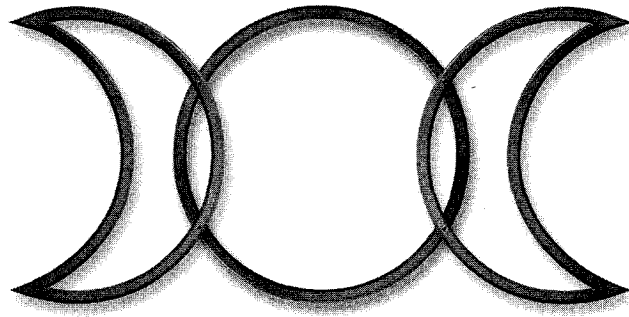


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher Penczak is an award-winning author, teacher, healing practitioner, and eclectic Witch. His practice draws upon the foundation of modern Witchcraft blended with the wisdom of mystical traditions from across the globe. He has studied extensively with witches, mystics and healers in various traditions to synthesize his own practice of witchcraft and healing. He is an ordained minister, herbalist, flower essence consultant and certified Reiki Master (Teacher) in the Usui-Tibetan and Shamballa traditions. He is the author of several books, including *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft*, *City Magick*, *Gay Witchcraft* and the *Magick of Reiki*. As a public speaker and teacher, he tours extensively throughout the year at bookstores and major gatherings across the country. Currently, Penczak lives in New Hampshire, with his partner. He is a faculty member at the North Eastern Institute of Whole Health and was a founding member of the Gifts of Grace Foundation, a non-profit organization in New Hampshire made up of individuals from diverse spiritual backgrounds dedicated to service to the local communities.

SONS of the GODDESS

A YOUNG MAN'S GUIDE TO WICCA



CHRISTOPHER PENCZAK

Llewellyn Publications
Woodbury, Minnesota

Sons of the Goddess: A Young Man's Guide to Wicca © 2005 by Christopher Penczak. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever, including Internet usage, without written permission from Llewellyn Publications except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

First Edition

Second Printing, 2006

Book design by Donna Burch

Cover Photo © 2004, Llewellyn Worldwide

Cover design by Kevin R. Brown

Editing by Andrew Karre and Tom Bilstad

Interior illustrations by Gavin Dayton Duffy

Llewellyn is a registered trademark of Llewellyn Worldwide, Ltd.

Tarot cards from the *Universal Tarot* by Roberto de Angelis © 2000 by Lo Scarabeo and reprinted with permission from Lo Scarabeo

Cover model used for illustrative purposes only and may not endorse or represent the book's subject

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Penczak, Christopher.

Sons of the goddess : a young man's guide to wicca / Christopher Penczak.—1st ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 13: 978-0-7387-0547-7

ISBN 10: 0-7387-0547-0

1. Witchcraft. 2. Teenage boys—Miscellanea. I. Title.

BF1571.5.T44P46 2005

299'.94—dc22

2004059438

Llewellyn Worldwide does not participate in, endorse, or have any authority or responsibility concerning private business transactions between our authors and the public.

All mail addressed to the author is forwarded but the publisher cannot, unless specifically instructed by the author, give out an address or phone number.

Any Internet references contained in this work are current at publication time, but the publisher cannot guarantee that a specific location will continue to be maintained. Please refer to the publisher's website for links to authors' websites and other sources.

Llewellyn Publications

A Division of Llewellyn Worldwide, Ltd.

2143 Wooddale Drive, Dept. 0-7387-0547-0

Woodbury, MN 55125-2989, U.S.A.

www.llewellyn.com

Printed in the United States of America

OTHER BOOKS BY CHRISTOPHER PENCZAK

City Magick: Urban Spells, Rituals, and Shamanism

(Samuel Weiser, Inc., 2001)

Spirit Allies: Meet Your Team from the Other Side

(Samuel Weiser, Inc., 2002)

The Inner Temple of Witchcraft: Magick, Meditation, and Psychic Development

(Llewellyn Publications, 2002)

Gay Witchcraft: Empowering the Tribe

(Samuel Weiser, Inc., 2003)

The Outer Temple of Witchcraft: Circles, Spells, and Rituals

(Llewellyn Publications, 2004)

The Witch's Shield

(Llewellyn Publications, 2004)

Magick of Reiki

(Llewellyn Publications, 2004)

The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft

(Llewellyn Publications, 2005)

Instant Magick: Ancient Wisdom, Modern Spellcraft

(Llewellyn Publications, 2006)

The Mystic Foundation

(Llewellyn Publications, 2006)

FORTHCOMING BOOKS BY CHRISTOPHER PENCZAK

Ascension Magick

(Llewellyn Publications, 2007)

CONTENTS

List of Figures . . . ix

Introduction . . . xi

1. **The Witch's Walk**
First Steps on the Path . . . 1
2. **Divine Sons and Mothers**
The First Stories . . . 15
3. **Men's Mysteries**
Forgotten Wisdom . . . 33
4. **Meditation Magick**
The Power of Stillness . . . 57
5. **Living in the World**
Roles and Responsibility . . . 79
6. **The Way of Ritual**
Remembering You Are Sacred . . . 99
7. **Spellcraft**
The Tools of Life . . . 129
8. **Walking the Wheel**
Holidays of the Witch . . . 159
9. **The Magickal Promise**
Dedication to the Craft . . . 175

Bibliography . . . 183

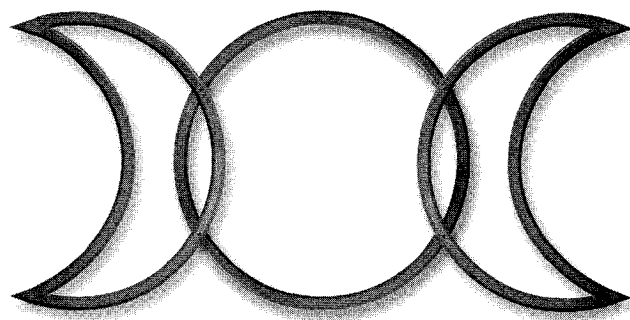
Glossary . . . 185

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Pentacle . . . 5
2. Yin-Yang . . . 19
3. The Sun . . . 22
4. The Fool . . . 39
5. The Magician . . . 40
6. The Chariot . . . 42
7. Knights . . . 43
8. Temperance . . . 44
9. The Emperor . . . 46
10. Kings . . . 46–47
11. The Sun and Moon . . . 49
12. The Devil . . . 50
13. Hand Triggers . . . 62
14. Chakras . . . 66
15. Protection Shield . . . 71
16. Protection Pentagram . . . 72
17. Altar . . . 103
18. Peyton . . . 105
19. Chalice . . . 106
20. Athame . . . 107
21. Wand . . . 109
22. Goddess Position . . . 114
23. God Position . . . 115
24. Eye of Horus . . . 124
25. Voodoo Doll or Poppet . . . 133

X LIST OF FIGURES

- 26. Charm Making . . . 138
- 27. Cinquefoil . . . 140
- 28. Hazel in Ogham . . . 144
- 29. Pentacle and Mars . . . 150
- 30. Travel Protection Symbol . . . 156
- 31. Wheel of the Year . . . 160
- 32. Planetary Symbols . . . 172



Introduction

When I became a witch, I was just learning what it meant to be a man. In fact, I think I became a witch before I became a man. I began my study of Wicca when I started college. I was only eighteen when someone introduced me to the idea of the Goddess and God. Although I found witchcraft and magick very interesting, they didn't click with me right away. I was very skeptical. I appreciated the ideas but didn't understand the spirituality that goes along with witchcraft. Even when I began, I focused on the science of the witchcraft, but truly it's a science, art, and spiritual practice. Now, years later, I realize the spirituality is more important than the spells, and that the spells lead you to understanding your spirit.

As I continued on my journey, I realized that so much of witchcraft—the “Craft,” as witches call it—focused on the Goddess and the feminine power; I wondered where I fit in as a young man. My teachers were all wonderful, wise women, but I wondered if Wicca was really my spiritual home as a young man. Even the popular male images were of old wizards and mature kings to whom I didn't relate. I learned that witches are walkers between worlds, grounded with one foot in the physical and another in the spiritual.

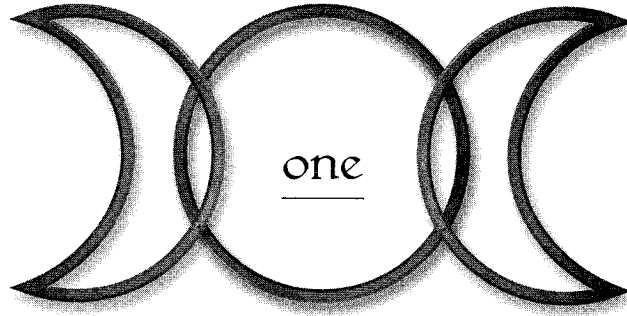
In many ways, I felt like I was indeed between worlds but not very grounded. I was stuck between the dreams of a child and the responsibilities of an adult—playing with the idea of magick, focusing on the science of witchcraft, but not knowing a spiritual path. Even though I thought of myself as a sensitive guy, I was still a male identifying with so much female energy in ritual, that it left me a bit confused spiritually. Although I had great role models, Craft teachers, and parents who shaped my evolving morals and character, I didn't have any male role models in my world of witchcraft.

So I had to seek out male images of spirituality in the Craft, and they were there right before me. I wanted to find teachings that included the God as well as the Goddess, so I looked to the ancient myths to show me the divine male. I looked not only for images of masculine divinity but also for examples of the relationships between masculine and feminine divinity. Since I started my studies in the Craft with my mother, the stories of mothers and sons as Goddess and God particularly fascinated me. During my days in college, I also looked at the ever-changing relationship of the Goddess and God through the Wheel of the Year—how the young God is born as a child, grows into adulthood, takes on responsibility as king, and gives back to the community. I used that changing image as my role model as I went through my own changes.

Through these role models and my practice, I learned to honor both my masculine and feminine energy to find balance. Through witchcraft, I learned how to be an adult. By embracing magick, I embraced both my personal power and my sense of responsibility to myself, my family, and my community. Through the spiritual path of magick, I learned how to be a true witch and a true man.



When the idea of this book was suggested to me, I wasn't sure what I thought, but my teaching had recently surrounded me with a lot of young, male witches. So I talked with them about it. We all thought it would be great to have a book that was different from the traditional Wicca 101 book—a book that would focus on the journey from boy to man. I wish I had had something that talked about this rite of passage and talked about being a man in the craft. I hope this book helps you walk your own path toward empowerment as a son of the Goddess.



The Witch's Walk: First Steps on the Path

One of the first things I learned about witchcraft is that you must walk your talk. Not everyone should go around calling himself a witch, but with so many personal and eclectic traditions of Wicca, there is no central authority, council, or agency that certifies people as witches. And most witches prefer it that way. I know I do. So then, how do you become a witch? I was taught that true witches know their stuff. They know their Craft, their history, and their science. True witches, as opposed to those just playing with the idea of being a witch, not only know these things, they *live* them. True witches strive to live a life of balance, harmony, health, and magick. Some of us are truly witches at heart, but if you want to be a true witch, you should seek to know your history and traditions and learn the skills to put them into practice.

If you come across people who only talk about putting spells on others or talk about how powerful they are, then they are not walking the witch's path. Powerful people don't need to tell you how powerful they are. They simply are, and they know their greatest

Eclectic Witchcraft

Modern traditions of witchcraft are inspired by many different sources. When witchcraft was first revived in popular culture, starting publicly in the 1950s, most people practiced a formal tradition, such as Gardnerian and Alexandrian witchcraft, both named after their founders, Gerald Gardner and Alex Sanders. To be a member of these traditions, you must be initiated by someone in that tradition. Since the 50s, many other magickal traditions have been newly created or revealed to the public. The availability of printed material on Wicca has encouraged those who can't find a group or teacher in a specific tradition to become solitary practitioners, experimenting with many different systems and styles. Solitaries, and those not formally a part of any one tradition, have adapted material from different cultures, traditions, and time periods, to create their own unique eclectic traditions. A modern eclectic witch can draw from the wisdom of the Celts, but also honor the Asian figure Quan Yin as an aspect of the Goddess. One of my teachers said a good witch steals from the best. It's not that we steal as much as we adapt the wisdom of many cultures under the umbrella of witchcraft. An eclectic witch uses what sings to his soul and what works. Though some think the term "eclectic witch" is derogatory, and granted many people call themselves eclectic witches with little knowledge and practice, I embrace the term because a good eclectic witch has to be knowledgeable about many traditions and techniques.

power is over themselves and their own reactions, rather than their power over other people. Witches walk a path of wisdom, and wisdom tells us when to use magick and when to wait and watch.

WHAT IS WICCA?

"Wicca" is a word that causes a lot of confusion today. Usually, it refers to the modern revival of the Old Religion, the religion of witchcraft. The root of the word "witchcraft" can be traced to the words *wicca* and *wicce*. Some scholars believe the root means to "bend or shape." This refers to the witch's ability to do magick, to bend or shape the energies of life to create spells and healing. Others think the word means "wise," relating to the root of the word "wizard," and they think of witches as the keepers of wisdom. The more you study the Craft, the more you will find differing opinions among witches, scholars, and experts.

Modern witches often use the word "Wicca" and "Wiccan" instead of "witchcraft" and "witch" in order to prevent the bad feelings that the word "witch" can conjure in people. Alternately, some think "Wicca" refers to the religion and "witchcraft" to spellwork. Many others use "Wicca" to refer to formal traditions of witchcraft, such as Gardnerian or Alexandrian Wicca, and they think of eclectic practices as simply "witchcraft." I use the words "witch" and "Wiccan" fairly interchangeably, depending on those around me, but I prefer the word "witch." I think it is important to make that word less scary to people, and if they see loving, happy, helpful witches, then we can break those old stereotypes.

Many practitioners also use the word "pagan," from Latin. It refers to the people of the rural lands and, historically, the word became associated with the Old Religion during the rise of Christianity. All witches/Wiccans are pagan,

but not all pagans identify with the word “witch.” Technically, we are “neopagans” or modern pagans, but not too many people like that title, and most prefer just pagan. In the end, I always refer to someone the way he wishes to be called. If I’m not sure, I politely ask. Most people don’t mind explaining what they mean and how they feel about the word. Some witches see themselves as the clergy, priestess and priest, of the larger pagan community, but most pagans would disagree, feeling they are just as much a priestess, but do not like the label, or specific traditions associated with witchcraft/Wicca.

WHAT DO WITCHES BELIEVE?

Witchcraft is a science, an art, and a religion. We don’t force beliefs on anyone who trains in witchcraft, because your experience will lead you to your beliefs. I came to witchcraft wanting to prove it all wrong. I thought all magick was make-believe, until I had an experience when magick worked for me, and then I wanted to know more. I understood there was a science, some basic concepts, behind the ideas of Wicca. There is a creative component to practicing it—an art—that lets you express yourself in ways other religions do not encourage. These experiences lead you to what is commonly thought of as Wiccan beliefs—the religion.

Many witches have awakening experiences in meditation, magick, or psychic ability that inspire an investigation into the Craft. Many more start with a strong interest in witchcraft, and through training, they have experiences that lead to a change in perspective. Magick stops being a fairy tale and becomes something real and meaningful. Hopefully it becomes a regular part of life.

Witches believe in the power of nature. All things are alive and filled with energy—our own bodies, plants, trees, and rocks. These natural energies in this world and other spiritual worlds often manifest as spirits, faeries, and the gods and goddesses of myth. To witches, the divine, known as the Divine Mind or Great Spirit to some, comes in forms both male and female, God and Goddess, Lord and Lady. From the divine parents come the many gods and goddesses of myth, called the Old Ones or Ancient Ones. They are embodied by aspects of nature, such as the Earth, sky, Sun, Moon, and harvest. We believe the divine spirit comes in many forms and many faces and we tend to be tolerant of other people’s religions and beliefs.

What’s A Warlock?

One name I will not use is “warlock.” Although used to refer to a male witch in many books and movies, it is considered ignorant to do so in Wiccan communities. Many believe the word “warlock” means “traitor” or “oath Breaker,” so we prefer the word “witch” for both men and women.

Magic/Magick?

Witches and mages often spell spiritual “magick” with a *k* at the end. They do this to differentiate it from illusions and stage-show trickery. I’ve seen others spell it “magik,” “majic,” “majick,” and “majik,” though these spellings are not as common. Many witches still refer to both spiritual work and stage-show work “magic,” wanting to reclaim the spiritual meaning of the word and spelling. The “k” spelling is more prevalent in the traditions of ceremonial magick. A practitioner of ceremonial magick is referred to as a magician, mage or magus, though some Craft traditions refer to the High Priest of a coven as a magus as well.

Witches learn to “tune in” to this living energy. By partnering with it through meditation, ritual, and psychic ability, we can do magick. Magick is the ability to create the changes we want in our lives and sometimes in the lives of others. A specific act of magick is known as a spell. We *spell* our words out, and similarly, magick spells are like connecting symbols to make our meaning known to the universe. Spells communicate our desires to the universe to make things happen. The universe responds to our call, and together we shape the energies of life to manifest our intention as a physical reality.

Psychic development is also part of witchcraft training. As spells are a way of speaking to the universe to make change, psychic ability is a way of listening to the universe. By developing meditation skills, we learn to listen before we take action.

Modern witches use the symbol of the pentacle—a five-pointed star, or pentagram, in a circle. It’s an ancient symbol of sacred geometry used now as a symbol of protection and magick. The five points symbolize the five senses—sight, touch, smell, taste, and hearing. The circle is the sixth sense, our psychic ability. The pentacle is also a symbol of the five elements—earth, air, fire, water, and spirit. Lastly, it is a symbol of the human body—two arms, two legs, and the head. Though some mistake it for a symbol of evil, its true meaning is spiritual balance. Witches wear the pentacle as jewelry both in ritual and daily life. We believe it helps with both physical and psychic protection and can help focus psychic/magickal abilities and grant inner balance.

We honor the cycles of nature, and our holidays are important days in the natural world. We honor special times of the Sun, Moon, and stars, as well as times of planting and harvesting. The eight main holidays in witchcraft are called the Wheel of the Year. Witches can celebrate these holidays, along with Moon rituals, in large communities, in small groups, or all alone. Smaller groups, ranging from three to thirteen members, are called covens. A witch can practice in a coven, as a solitary, or both. I celebrate the Wheel of the Year with my coven, but do magick and celebrate moon rituals alone.

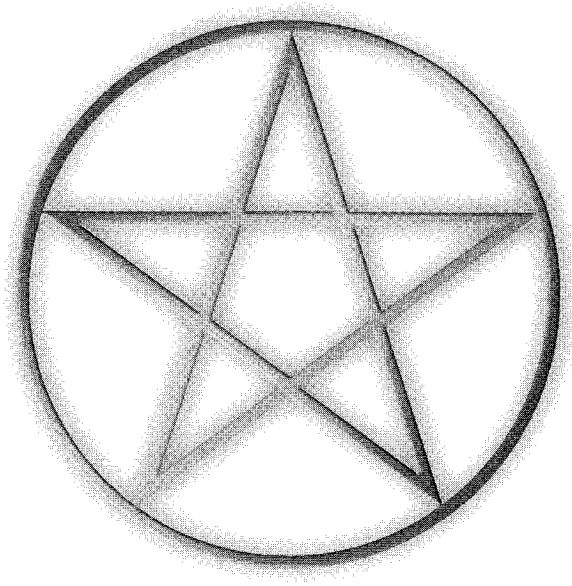


Figure 1: Pentacle

We are our own priests and priestesses and can do our own rituals. Although we find friends in the community, we don't need anyone else to do things for us. Witches must be well educated in many arts and skills.

Most of us believe that we live beyond death and that our spirit leaves this world and travels to the spirit worlds. Different traditions of witchcraft call this place by different names, such as the otherworlds, underworld, summerland, or Avalon. These are the realms of the ancestors and the realms of gods and spirits. A soul spends time here resting and recuperating before it will return to be reborn into the world. Not all witches believe in reincarnation, but it is a fairly common belief among magical communities.

THE RULES

Only two widely accepted rules exist in modern witchcraft. The first is variously called the Law of Return, the Rule of Three, or the Threefold Law. Many witches think of it as the Principle of Cause and Effect or the Law of Karma. The Law of Return says that anything you do will return to you threefold. It means any energy—any thought, word, or deed—will return to its source and be magnified by the universe. I think of it as a rubber

ball that you throw out into the world. It eventually hits a wall and bounces back at you harder than when you sent it. This is the foundation of magick. Whatever you do returns to you and becomes real because it comes back stronger.

The second rule is the Wiccan Rede, which isn't really a rule at all. A "rede" is just a good idea—like a creed—something to live by, but it isn't a regulation in the traditional sense. The Wiccan Rede is often expressed this way: "An' let it harm none, do what ye will." Live your life as you think is best, but do not harm anyone, including yourself. Knowing the Rule of Three, the Rede makes sense, because if you harm anyone, harm will return to you. With this, all are free to make their own decisions and live by those consequences. In Christianity, they have a similar idea expressed in the Bible in Matthew 7:12 and more commonly known as the Golden Rule, which is, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." Most religions, at their core, teach compassion and love, Wicca included. Witches aspire to live the words "Perfect love and Perfect trust"; these are sacred passwords used to enter the ritual space in some traditions. We try to put them into action in the ritual, but also in our daily life.

WHERE DO WITCHES COME FROM?

It's no mystery where witches come from. Witches are people. We come from regular families and homes like everybody else. But our history, our roots, are another story. Our roots are tangled and hidden. Not everybody knows where they start or where our family tree is growing.

I think that wherever there were people, there were witches. Wherever tribes of people gathered, there were people who understood the need to be connected to nature and the spirit world and to use that connection to help the tribe. In other cultures, these people are called shamans and medicine people, but in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, they are the ancestors of the witch. I look back to the Stone Age as the start. Evidence of a Goddess-reverent Stone Age culture exists, and many witches look to this time as the start of witchcraft. Many statues of ancient Goddess images survive into our time.

Human culture developed from Stone Age nomadic tribes to agricultural civilizations. Some witches remained on the outskirts of these civilizations, becoming the cunning men and wise women, while others formed groups of priests and priestesses in ancient cultures like Egypt, Sumer, Greece, and Rome. They became the Druids of the

Celtic people and the seers and rune masters of the Teutonic people. All of these cultures have influenced the modern revival of witchcraft. Many think of Wicca as only being Celtic, but our roots really reach into many cultures. In each of these lands, the power of magick and service to the community survived, even though these cultures themselves clashed together in the building of empires and the migrating of tribes.

Once we enter the Common Era of history—referred to by many scholars and most pagans with the abbreviation CE, but others in the world use the initial AD, *Anno Domini*, Latin for “in the year of our Lord”—the role of the witch changes. The Common Era is marked by the birth of Jesus Christ for many in the Western world. Christianity started as a cult that was persecuted, but eventually it became the official religion and unifying force throughout Europe during the decline of the first Roman Empire, finally paving the way for the Holy Roman Empire.

During the reign of the Holy Roman Empire, we find the strongest evidence of the witch hunts. Modern witches call this period the “Burning Times.” The persecution was started by the Roman Catholic Church but continued later by other religious and secular authorities. Some scholars believe the persecutions actually started in the later era of the Roman Empire, as rulers were afraid of being poisoned by those who held knowledge of the plants that healed and harmed, such as the folk witches. The Catholic Church adopted the persecutions, adding a religious context to it and continuing with a fervor. Many people were persecuted for the crime of witchcraft and were often put to death by horrible methods, even though most had nothing to do with true witchcraft. The victims included Jews, Moslems, heretical Christians, midwives, herbalists, homosexuals, and many others who were simply not considered socially acceptable. Their deaths included pressing, drowning, hanging, and burning. It was Europe’s first holocaust.

At these times, we find the worst smear campaigns against witchcraft. In an effort to fit old beliefs into the fairly new Christian mythology, witchcraft was described as Satanism, a perversion of Christianity. In truth, most witches, then and now, do not believe in the Devil. In fact, many modern Satanists do not believe in an entity known as Satan. In witchcraft, our beliefs predate the notion of the Christian Devil, and we look at this supposed force of ultimate evil as a social and political scapegoat for the horrors of the Middle Ages. Even more sadly, the majority of victims had nothing to do with true witchcraft or Satanism. Some were folk healers and medicine women, but most were Christians and were killed due to politics, money, or paranoia.

Were the Burning Times Real?

Were the Burning Times real? Depends on whom you ask. A lot of people disagree about what happened at this point in history. If you are asking if people were persecuted and killed, then definitely, they were real. Were all those killed witches? No. A lot of people got caught in the persecutions. Numbers have been over- and underestimated on both sides and some have tried to prove or disprove the Burning Times altogether. We'll never know all the details for certain. Surviving documents clearly demonstrate a persecution against suspected witches, but we don't know exactly how many people were killed and if they had anything to do with real paganism, magick, or witchcraft. In the end, I suggest being open to listen to all points of view, and then see what makes the most sense to you.

The persecutions continued for the life of the Holy Roman Empire and followed the European settlers to America, most famously in the Salem witch trials. Although no one was burned at the stake, and most likely no one was a true witch, the settlers were also plagued with the same paranoia and fear that swept through Europe, causing the imprisonment and death of many people in this American settlement. Recent evidence suggests the paranoia was due, at least in part, to ergot poisoning. Ergot, a fungus affecting grain, can induce hallucinations, and ergot seems more prevalent in the areas and time of the witch trials.

Finally, reasonable voices rose to power in Europe and America. We entered into a period of reason and logic. It ended the persecutions, but it did little to keep magick alive. Science and technology began to dissect the physical world, and for some, despite their benefits, they took the magick and mystery out of the unknown world. Things like spellcraft, witches, faeries, and spirits became folklore and make-believe. The only way witchcraft survived was in fragments of magickal books and through family traditions kept in secret.

The Craft of the witch was revived in the twentieth century. The laws banning witchcraft in England were repealed

midcentury, because people thought them old and superstitious, but it helped those in family traditions and modern reconstructed traditions come out to the public and share their beliefs. An interest in the mystical grew in both Europe and America, starting what we now call the New Age movement. Spiritual seekers studied medieval manuscripts, shamanism, crystals, and herbs with a desire to find a spiritual practice that was holistic and healthy. From England, traditions of witchcraft grew and spread, changing along the way with the changes in culture, time, and people. Soon books were being printed about witchcraft so people could learn about it and find ways to practice it, with or without formal teachers and covens. The witchcraft family tree branched out in many directions. Now there are almost as many traditions and forms of witchcraft as there are witches.

WALKING OUR TALK

If we desire to walk the path of the witch, we must walk our talk. Good witches not only understand their history and beliefs, but also live their lives from them. Witches strive to embody the best qualities of humanity and live balanced lives. Our ritual is said to embody “perfect love and perfect trust.” Wiccans must strive to carry this unconditional love outside of the ritual circle and live it.

Witches are magickal, but we live grounded in the material world. So much of our spirituality is involved in the practical, stable, commonsense world, but sometimes in our pursuit of magick, we forget to be grounded. True witches see the value in common sense and practical wisdom as well as in mystical lore. Sometimes the hardest problems are solved by simple solutions and don't require elaborate acts of magick.

Many people think witches are not moral, because we have no Ten Commandments or other similar rules. We actually have to be the most moral of traditions, since we have no “thou shall” and “thou shall not” telling us what to do, not do, and how to think. We must be aware of everything we do—not only our actions, but also our thoughts and words, since we know thought and word carry magickal power and magickal responsibility.

With our movie, television, and book images of witches switching from evil, ugly villains to powerful and glamorous heroes, it is easy to get swept up into the mystery. People forget the original purpose of the witch. Witches are caretakers. We are servants for the highest good and are here to live healthy lives, but also to share our wisdom and magick with others. We are stable, vital members of our communities. We are ministers, healers, and mystics, adding to the transformation of the world.

Male witches in particular have to be mindful of their role in both the mainstream and pagan communities. Most people assume to be a witch means you are female, and a male practitioner is a warlock, wizard, or mage. Though most don't use the term “warlock,” some male pagans call themselves wizards or mages. The image has become more popular with the success of movies such as the Harry Potter series, reinforcing the idea that women are witches and men are wizards. I feel it's really important for male witches to stand up strongly and be heard, but to be noticed by our actions, our service, and our sense of community spirit. When you start the path of the witch early in life, particularly if you have little support around you, people assume it's a phase, and that you'll “grow out of it.” The best way to show others that this is your path is by the positive improvements you make in yourself and the world around you. That's how I began to teach

witchcraft. While in college, friends noticed a dramatic change in me, and wanted to know my "secret." Soon I was leading informal study groups, guided meditations and Moon circles. I was lucky to have many supportive people in my life at that time, but most of my unsupportive friends and family eventually agreed that this was the path for me, because I was much happier and healthier than I had been when I was Catholic. If you live your path, other people will know. You won't have to tell them. In fact, sometimes it's better to be low key and silent about it and let them come to you. It's easy to get excited about your awakening to a magickal life, and want to share that with everybody around you, but not everybody is open to it. Your zealotry can come across poorly to those who suspect that Wiccan, esoteric, or New Age philosophies are harmful. I know some of my family thought I was joining a cult. When I calmed down enough from my enthusiasms, and really put the spiritual principles into action in my daily life, family and friends realized I found something that was really healthy for me, and encouraged my exploration of magick.

We also have to be more conscious in our growing pagan communities. As many come to the Craft seeking the Goddess, the male role is not always clearly defined. Modern witchcraft is still like an infant. We have a long family tree, but in many ways, as a people, we are still struggling to build our communities. Men must find the most balanced ways to support our sisters in the Craft, partner with them, but also take time to reclaim, explore, and create anew our own mysteries and rituals. As women have explored the Goddess, we have to be free to explore the God. I know I wholly came to the Craft wanting nothing to do with the God. I loved the Goddess because the idea of the Goddess was new and different. I had to struggle to find the God of witches and make him a part of my life.

Because of our history, witches are open and tolerant of other religions and cultures, and seek to learn about them to better understand everybody's point of view. Some of my best friends are Christians and although we don't believe the same things, we still love each other very much. Witches realize that even in the world of paganism there are many paths and ways of doing things. No one way is absolutely correct. Many paths are open if they are grounded in wisdom and common sense. We must also be on guard against fanaticism. It's easy to have a wonderful experience and then assume that everybody must have the same experience or belief. I got into that for a while. I was so excited to share what was working for me that some of my nonreligious friends thought I was

trying to convert them. I was just excited, but my unbridled enthusiasm caused us some problems. Everyone's path is individual, even if we have similarities.

I recently spoke to one guy online who was essentially practicing witchcraft, but would not use the words "Wiccan" or "witch" to describe himself. When I asked why, he told me that he found many Wiccans contradicted themselves and used double talk, not really understanding their own beliefs. Others he encountered were dogmatic and insisted their ways were the only ways. He had some bad experiences with those claiming to be Wiccan, but in the end, it seemed like he understood and practiced it better than most of the people he met. I encouraged him to try to connect to the community again, even as a solitary witch, and to teach by example, simply by meeting other witches, since he was such a great example of what witchcraft really is. Though he didn't claim the word "witch," he truly lives a magickal life. He knows the basic principles of magick and ritual, and celebrates the lunar and solar holidays, but also feels free to adapt his magick with new ideas and techniques. He is educated in the old ways, but is not afraid to try new things. He is actively working on his own healing, using magick and meditation in this process. Most importantly, he knows his thoughts, words, and deeds manifest his reality and affect everything around him, so he takes great care and responsibility. Those are all critical aspects to living life as a witch.

Healing and Purification

Healing has been the hardest part of witchcraft for me. My teachers insisted that since witchcraft is a healing art, you must first learn about healing yourself and seeking out help from others when you need it. To witches, healing is not just healing the physical body, but the mind, heart, and soul as well.

When I came to witchcraft, I wasn't a happy person. I kept a lot of secrets because I felt no one would understand me, not my parents and not my friends. I got mad a lot because no one understood me, but I couldn't tell anyone that I was mad or why I was mad. I was an artist and musician in an all-boys Catholic school that focused on sports and competition. Spiritually, I felt abandoned by the church because they didn't understand me either, and I started to doubt anything spiritual at all. Once I got into college, everybody expected great things from me, but I was still mad and didn't really know who I was or how to really love myself and take care of myself. Then I found magick. One of my first teachers stressed self-love as the foundation to magick. I followed her teachings and my practice of witchcraft as a part of my daily life transformed me. One

of the simplest lessons was writing in my journal every day. Through that act, and through learning now to meditate, my attitudes changed. My confidence rose. Most importantly, I found a sense of peace that comes with knowing who you are. With this strength, I came out of the closet to my family and friends, and built relationships with everyone I knew based on honesty and spiritual values. My anger didn't go away immediately, but I began a path that helped me heal my emotions and face my shadow.

Purification is another big part of magick. We are purified physically before ritual, but the practice also helps purify the mind and emotions. My teacher insisted I learn to meditate and journal before learning how to do spells. I got mad at her, because I wanted to learn spells right away, after having a taste of success. But I'm glad I listened and waited. If not, I might have done things I would regret. Meditation helped me look at myself in the mirror and change what I didn't like about myself. Magick is the act of transformation, both outside of yourself, but more importantly inside. As you walk the path of the witch, think about what things you want to change about yourself. How would you feel if they were changed? As I continued my journey, other people noticed the changes and began to ask me about witchcraft and meditation. It wasn't too long after that I found the Goddess asking me to walk this path of teaching and writing.

Only by becoming mentally purified was I able to hear the messages of the Goddess. The more I meditated and did ritual, the more I felt a connection to the crow goddess Macha. In the first ritual I learned, my teachers taught me to call upon Celtic deities for the four elements. For air, we called upon the Irish goddess Macha. I have to admit when I started, I didn't feel much of anything, but I found the magick worked, so I continued. The clearer I became, the more I psychically felt, saw, and heard. It started with feeling a breeze when I called upon Macha. Then I saw a vague outline. Soon she began to spontaneously appear when I meditated and asked for guidance, and I could hear her in my mind.

Purification is not only about ritual baths and incense. Purification is a big part of the witch's journey. My stressful, rock-star-ambition experiences were like the flames of the forge, refining and tempering me in their heat until I could better partner with the Goddess, and later God, to fulfill my true will in the world, which at the moment is teaching and writing. The process allowed me to hear their messages and receive their support. In fact, releasing my unhappy job in exchange for something so unexpected yet fulfilling opened me up to another cycle of deeper healing in the following years, where

I received the training, skills, and confidence to become a minister in my community. Only by these periods of self-healing and purification could I walk my talk and live the life of a witch.

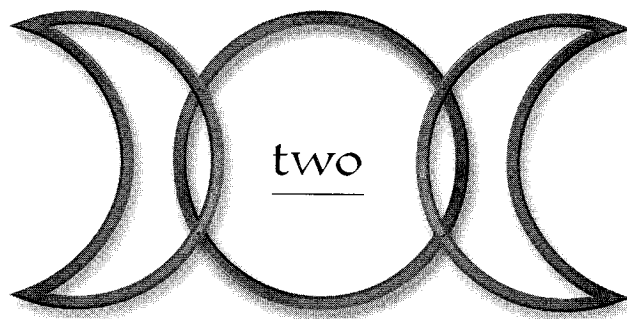
WHY DO YOU WANT TO STUDY WICCA?

I can't answer this question for you. Only you can. Reflection before making any major decision is important. I often write in my journal to help me figure things out and reflect on my thoughts and feelings. Witches keep a special book of magick, called a Book of Shadows. Traditionally, these are spell books with rituals and recipes. In modern times, the spell books have evolved into personal and magickal journals where witches write down whatever is going on in their lives, including spells, rituals, and meditations. It is a place to explore your thoughts and feelings.

A lot of the first exercises in this book involve writing in your Book of Shadows. To some, it can feel like homework, but it's really preparation to do magick. Although it is a lot of fun, Wicca isn't only about fun. There are some serious things we need to think about before doing magick and ritual. The Book of Shadows is an excellent place to do that thinking.

Exercise: Why Do You Want to Study Wicca?

Get a notebook to be your Book of Shadows. It can be a simple spiral-bound notebook or a more formal journal. I prefer a three-ring binder, so I can rearrange material as my practice grows. Write at least a page about your thoughts on witchcraft and reasons why you want to study Wicca. What first attracted you to Wicca? What do you expect from it? What are you willing to put into it? Do you have expectations of witchcraft from television, movies, and books? If so, how do you think real witchcraft differs from the media? Perhaps you are already actually involved in Wicca. How do you want to grow? What are your goals? What have you learned? Write down all your thoughts and reasons, and if you feel that learning Wicca at this time is the best thing for you, then continue onward to chapter 2.



Divine Sons and Mothers: The First Stories

I would love to say that I come from a long line of family witches, but I don't. I started to practice Wicca with my mother. We both took classes at the same time and learned the same things, but we are very different witches. She is a great intuitive witch and doesn't often know why she does things, but they work. I started as the more scholarly witch, researching all my spells, and I would often find reasons for my mother's intuitions. We make a great pair and practiced in a small coven together for many years.

It wasn't until much later that I discovered why my mother studied witchcraft. She was afraid I was joining a cult, and she knew that if she forbade me to study it and take classes, I would want it all the more and move farther from her. Instead, this wise woman of mine studied with me and made it a bonding experience for us. We were already close, but the Craft strengthened my relationship with both my parents.

On our first altar, we wanted a statue of the Goddess and God together, but couldn't find anything we both liked. Then, while on vacation in Arizona, we found a Native

American statue—a mother figure holding a child—and thought of the powerful link between Goddess and God as mother and son. The son starts as a child and grows into his own power and responsibility. It reminded us of our relationship, so that statue became the focus of our altar. It still sits on my mother's altar, now that I'm grown up and living in my own home with my own altar.

THE GODS OF WICCA

I started in the traditions of scientific witchcraft, studying psychic ability and magick theory. At first I didn't see it as religious or even spiritual. My very first teacher, a family friend, didn't teach the religious aspect because of fear from her Roman Catholic background. I didn't explore the Goddess and God until my mother and I later found other teachers. I didn't understand the religious aspect. The idea of many gods and goddesses from ancient myth seemed like simple stories to me. They didn't seem real or have deep spiritual meaning to me. I didn't know how they applied to my life here and now.

One teacher told me that the gods couldn't be understood. They can only be experienced. And I think she was right, but I still try to understand and explain them.

I think of the gods as expressions of the divine life force that creates all things. This life force, or Great Spirit, has a female, or Goddess, side, and a male, or God, side. I think the Goddess has many different faces, many different masks. Sometimes she is the Earth Mother. Sometimes she is the Moon goddess. Different cultures call her masks by different names. Each mask and each name make her seem a little bit different, but beneath it all, she is still the Goddess. The masks and names make it easier to see her. The Goddess, in her entirety, is just too vast to understand, but if you only look at one part of her, she becomes knowable and more human. The God has many faces and forms too. He has many names and functions. He shifts as we look at him and seek to understand him.

Technically, belief in many gods is called polytheism, "poly" meaning "many," and "theism" relating to god or the divine. Pagans and witches are considered polytheistic. I think this application of polytheism is misunderstood. Each god is individual, yet is also connected to the greater whole. Many witches believe we are all connected by one life force. Some call it the Great Spirit, borrowing from Native American terminology. Others call it the Divine Mind or Web of Life.

Connecting with the Gods

Through our dreams, rituals, and meditations, we can connect with the Goddess and God. That is what the first witches and shamans did, and that is how we have our myths. Myths change over time and retelling, but true witches can build a lasting personal relationship with the divine parents and learn new stories. The gods can take the role of guide, teacher, healer, and parent.

The stories of the gods and their relationships and conflicts reflect our inner relationships and conflicts. Psychologists would call these figures and themes archetypes, but witches think of them as living energies. They are not psychological constructs, but divine beings. When you first study Wicca, many suggest that you start with Greek mythology because it's the easiest. People are most familiar with Greek myth in our Western culture. I had a hard time with Greek mythology. I disliked it because a lot of the gods seemed so childish and immature to me. They fought. They loved. They struggled, and they triumphed. If they are gods, then why did they do all of it? Why wasn't it easy? They are very different from the models of divinity given in Christianity, or at least the Christian images that were emphasized in my upbringing. They aren't detached or above it all. They are much more human. Wicca and paganism is not a religion of complete detachment or renouncement of the world. We know that our passions and drives are divine, because they are reflected in our gods. But we also know everything happens in cycles, and none of these passions and drives are permanent. We are not our passions and drives. We are not our emotions, thoughts, or bodies, but we are the divine beings experiencing all those things, and they are all part of our sacred path. One magickal philosophy witches often quote is called the Principle of Correspondence, "As above, so below." It means patterns repeat. The patterns in the realm of the gods are reflected in the realm of humans.

THE MOTHER OF ALL

Most witches focus on the Goddess. She is the first mother, the star goddess of creation, and the Earth goddess who is the planet we live on. She has many names, but one of her most popular, as Mother Earth, is Gaia. Gaia, also spelled Gaea, is the name the Greeks used. The Goddess is also embodied by the Moon and has many names, such as Artemis, Diana, Luna, and Selene.

The Divine Couple

When witches think about the Goddess and God in their most primal forms, they are seen as the polar energies that create the universe. They are not opposing forces but complements, like a battery or magnet. To work properly it needs a positive and negative end. They are often associated with these qualities.

God	Goddess
Male	Female
Sky	Earth
Sun	Moon
Light	Dark
Day	Night
Projecting	Receiving
Yang	Yin
Mental	Emotional
Air and fire	Earth and water

But like all true complements, each deity contains a little bit of the other; just like in the yin-yang symbol, one side contains the seed of the other.

Modern pagans think of the Goddess in the triple form, as maiden, mother, and crone. She can be seen as the seasons—going to the underworld in the winter as the crone and being reborn again as the maiden in the spring. She is seen in the phases of the Moon, from first crescent as maiden, Full Moon as mother, and darkening Moon as crone. Others think of the Triple Goddess in locations—the Moon and stars as maiden, the Earth as mother, and the underworld as the crone.

Some images of the Goddess are grand and can't be put into categories. Her other names are Danu, the Morrigan, Isis, Hecate, Freya, and Yemeja. Each is different, but each is a part of the same source, like many rivers running off one mountain. Even though she has many faces, the mother is eternal. She is the creator of all. Our bodies are made from her body. Our blood is from her water. She is the force of life that connects and animates all things. She is Mother Nature, Mother Earth, and Mother Universe, all at the same time.

THE GOOD GOD

The Goddess created the God as her companion and consort. The God starts his life as her child and grows to be her love. The God becomes her champion, her warrior or

knight. He soon claims his responsibility as king, loyal to his queen. He grows to be the wizard, the wise man, and the healer.

Like the Goddess, the God appears in many forms and comes in many faces. He is the sky, king of clouds and storms, looking down upon the world and his children. Some would call him Zeus, Jupiter, or Thor. He is the god of the Sun and solar light. Then his name might be Apollo, Baldur, or Ra. He is the Green Man or Jack of the Green and god of the harvest. He is the horned animal god, stag-horned Cernunnos to the Celts and the goat-horned Pan to the Greeks. He is the god of the dead, like Hades or Osiris. All of these names and forms are loved by modern witches.

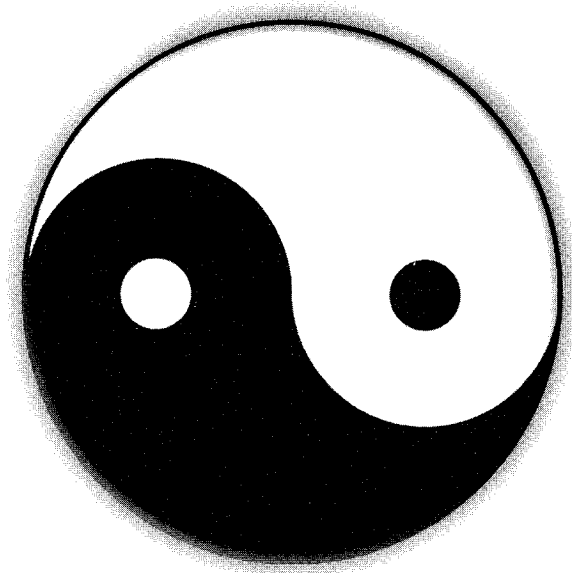


Figure 2: Yin-Yang

The God is the force of life too. He is the seed, and the Goddess is the fertile Earth. She creates and destroys, but he is the spark that ignites her flame. The God is the force that seeks out magick, while the Goddess is magick and mystery. In personal experiences, although the Goddess is very loving, many witches find the Goddess to be forceful and demanding at times. She can be the giver of tough love. Witches can find the God to be the gentle father, protective and nurturing.

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

When you are raised in a specific tradition or culture, you learn its core beliefs and stories. I grew up Catholic, and most Catholics and other Christians have their creation story in the book of Genesis. It is in the Bible, as a collection of stories. Many believe the Bible is literally true. Others think it's symbolically true, but all Christians have a sacred text that links them together as a community.

Witches don't have that luxury. We don't have one book with all the stories and all the answers. We don't believe that there is any one storybook or answer that is right for

everyone. Most witches believe that in the beginning there was a void or chaos and from this nothingness rose the first form of the Goddess and God, who then created all things and set the stars in motion with their love. But there are many ways to tell this story. Each tribe, each land has its own way, and we think that they are all correct, for their tellers, in their own ways. The truth is too big to capture in a single book.

We see the bits of wisdom in all stories, but this makes the witch's path harder. We have to study many books and many people to find our wisdom. Much of our wisdom was destroyed when we were persecuted. What is left is not easily understood by most. I like to say we don't have any holy books—no scripture—because our holy books are written in nature, upon the leaves and grass and harvest. Everyone must interpret it individually by experiencing it. We do, however, have lots of history, mythology, and anthropology books. Good witches should be good scholars, who study and apply what they learn.

So if the Goddess and God created the world in bliss and love, why is the world the way it is? Why is there war, famine, and poverty? Again, I wish there were an easy answer.

I think that as the Goddess and God are creators, we are like them in a lot of ways. We are creative, too, and we each get to create our world with our thoughts, words and actions. Some know this and create intentionally, doing what witches call magick. Others create unconsciously, but they still create. In the end, we all must live with the consequences of our creations. That is the basic rule of magick and of life. And that is why the world is in the state it is in. These are the consequences of our actions. There is great beauty and great turmoil, and we must work together to find a solution to our mutual problems.

My friend Alixaendrea explained it to her son in a way that made a lot of sense to me. She described the Goddess and God as parents, who must eventually let their children grow up and make their own decisions—or better yet, like gardeners, who plant the seed and care for it, but must eventually allow it to grow on its own. We are like those seeds, sprouting, growing, and bearing fruit on our own.

Like the Goddess and God, witches are gardeners too. We are caretakers who help the garden that we live in. Witches use their abilities for the greatest good, to help heal themselves, their people, and the world. In this day, with the Internet and modern communication, I think of my people, my tribe, as the global village. All people are my people, even if they are not witches. They are still my sisters and brothers.

MOTHERS AND SONS

Because I started my path with my mother, the stories of mothers and sons in mythology always fascinated me. At first, some of the stories scared me. No one wants to hear about how a young child god grows up to marry and have sex with his goddess mother! But I soon realized these are just stories, not reality. The God is all gods—all men, from child to king to wise man. The Goddess is all goddesses—all women, from maiden to mother to crone. Their stories are not literal, but symbolic, and it is interesting to look at these experiences of the Goddess with her son.

There are several common themes in these mother and son stories. Some mothers and sons have strong relationships in the beginning. They are close and supportive of each other. We could interpret these stories as initiations, trials to make you grow. Others are like enemies and seem to be antagonists, always fighting and misunderstanding each other. Another common theme is the search—the mother loses the son somehow and must undertake a quest to find him.

Here are some of the more popular goddesses and gods in the mother and son theme.

Mabon and Modron

The holiday associated with the autumn equinox is usually called Mabon by Wiccans, named after a Celtic god. Not many clear stories are left about Mabon. The one I know that is usually told at the equinox is a modern reconstructed version, focusing on his mother, Modron.

Modron is one Celtic name given to the great Earth goddess. She had a beautiful son named Mabon, who was a force of light and life. Mabon went wandering off without his mother and fell into the underworld, lost in the darkness, yet shining like a light. Modron, in her pain of losing a son, withdrew her power from the land and created the seasons of fall and then winter. Animals of the underworld came to Mabon to help him, including the wise salmon who led Mabon's rescuers to him. Although one version says that Arthur, fabled king of Camelot, rescued the child, others say Modron found Mabon in the dark of the underworld, and together they returned to the world, created the season of spring, destined to repeat this cycle with every turn of the seasons. Those familiar with Greek mythology sometimes call Mabon the Celtic male Persephone, as Persephone is a goddess who spends half the year in the underworld during the winter months, and

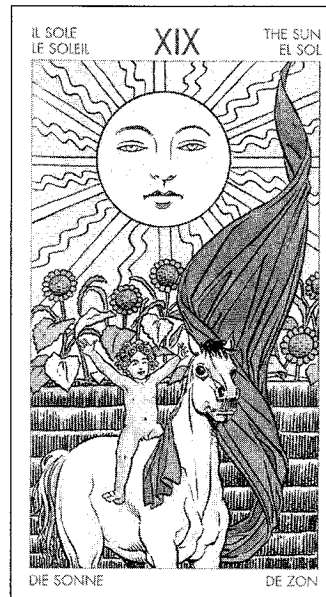


Figure 3: The Sun

the other half with her mother, Demeter, the goddess of grain and harvest, during the growing seasons. Like Modron, Demeter's sorrow causes fall and winter. Her joy brings spring and summer. Unlike Persephone, who reaches a sense of adulthood and a loss of innocence in her tale, Mabon's relationship with Modron is one of eternal youth. He is like the image of the child on the Sun tarot card, eternally youthful, and full of bright optimism. His light provides his mother with the inspiration to renew the land and provide the harvest. Modron is the protective mother, while her son seeks to journey on his own path. Their tale reminds us to have our own adventures. We all need time away, and often we have to face our own personal underworld alone, but don't forget the nurturing and support of the family is there when you return.

Horus and Isis

The story of Horus and Isis was one of the first myths I learned, and it plays a very important role in Egyptian magick and religion. Horus is the falcon-headed son of Isis, the great winged goddess of magick, and Osiris the god of vegetation and civilization. Osiris

was killed twice by his brother, Set, who wanted Osiris' kingdom, in the time when the gods were the kings (pharaohs) of humanity. Twice Isis resurrected Osiris with her magick. The second resurrection was not a complete success, so Osiris remained lord of the dead. He gave his living kingdom of Egypt to his son Horus, but Horus had to battle his uncle Set for it. The struggle was long and hard and involved the other gods, but Isis was her son's strongest proponent. At the same time, mother and son had their struggles, too, as Horus grew up and learned to assert himself as an adult and future king. She did what she felt best for the situation, often using her spells, but she didn't always consult her son. One story says that in a disagreement with his mother, Horus beheaded Isis, but she was magickally healed by the god Thoth. Eventually, Horus was victorious, and both he and his parents were restored to their place of honor and worship.

The story of Horus, Isis, and Osiris has many lessons in it. On the surface it is seen as a classic struggle of light versus dark: the forces of destruction, embodied by the desert god Set, against the forces of civilization, embodied by the divine couple and their son. On another level, it is the story of family, and the change family undergoes through difficult times. The loss of a parent, particularly of a father figure, is something that many people can relate to, whether the loss is from illness, violence, or simply a lack of connection. I know many guys who don't even know their father in any personal way because he chose not to maintain contact. There is a sort of mysterious death aspect to the relationship. If you are in that situation, it's easy to fantasize about your missing father in another world, unable to reach him. Isis and Horus in particular show the trials, on a mythic scale, of a single mother raising a child under difficult circumstances. Their own conflict, yet continued support for each other, is a strong lesson we can bring to our own families. Lastly, it's a story of growing up and taking responsibility. We often have to take on projects that we did not necessarily start, but we do so because it is the right thing to do. Horus inherited his problems with Set from his parents, but it was his job to handle the situation and restore order to the kingdom. If he didn't do it, no one else would. Mothers can support and advise you, but eventually you have to fight your own battles.

Anubis and Nephthys

Nephthys is the dark sister of Isis. Although she was the wife of Set, Nephthys is not evil or harmful. She was supportive of her sister and was considered a guide to the dead. Because Set could not conceive a child with her, Nephthys had a son with Osiris and named the child Anubis, though some sources disagree and believe Set is his true father,

due to their similar animal appearances. Anubis is the jackal-headed god. He and his mother first aided Isis and Horus in their struggles, and then later they assisted Anubis' true father, Osiris, with his duties in the underworld. In traditional magick, Anubis is credited as the guide of the souls of the dead and invented the mummification process used in Egypt. When we look at his story, he teaches many other lessons in the male archetype, including dealing with unknown father figure, and an unclear path. It was obvious he was not going to follow the path of his most obvious father figure, Set. Yet his path to Osiris was not particularly clear either. Anubis finds his own way, and then helps others find their paths in the otherworld. Anubis uses his creative talents to contribute to the community.

Lleu and Arianrhod

Lleu is the Welsh Celtic god who is the son of Arianrhod, the sky goddess of the silver wheel. He is associated with the Moon and stars.

Arianrhod, desiring to be King Math's new handmaiden, was asked by the king to prove her virginity and purity by stepping over his magick rod. She did, and two children fell from her womb. One immediately jumped into the ocean and swam like a dolphin, becoming the god Dylan. The other seemed premature and deformed and was soon snatched up by Arianrhod's brother, the wizard Gwydion. Arianrhod disowned both children, never revealing the father, so Gwydion raised his nephew, using his magick to make the boy strong and healthy. Gwydion is sometimes seen as a Merlin-like figure, raising a young warrior and navigating him through his difficulties much like Merlin did to Arthur. Arianrhod vowed that her son would never have a name unless she named him, never bear arms unless she armed him, and finally, that he would never have a wife from any race on Earth at that time. Gwydion used his magick to trick his sister. Arianrhod came upon the two disguised as cobblers. She saw her unknown son strike a wren with a small rock and called him Lleu Llaw Gyffes, or "fair-haired skillful hand." Gwydion then dropped his illusions, revealing their true nature, and took off with Lleu's new name. Years later, Gwydion and Lleu, disguised as bards, came to Arianrhod's castle. Gwydion used his magick to make it appear that the castle was under attack. The people of the castle needed all the help they could get to defend the keep, so the mother goddess gave both Lleu and Gwydion weapons and armor. Gwydion again dropped his illusions, revealed their true nature, and left with Lleu armored like a warrior. To overcome the final curse, Gwydion and Math, both skillful magicians, created a

bride of flowers for Lleu, named Blodeuwedd, but their marriage ended in tragedy and betrayal.

The story of Lleu and Arianrhod demonstrates the mythic antagonism that sometimes occurs between God and Goddess. You have to remember that most of these stories that paint the Goddess figure as the villain were recorded in much later times. When this tale was recorded, modern male-dominated Christianity was firmly established in Wales. Even in its current form, we can glean many lessons from Lleu and Arianrhod. It is the story of one figure and his difficulties with his mother, one who seems to block him at every turn. Some mystic scholars would say Arianrhod did so not out of cruelty, but symbolically as part of an initiation process in a Goddess tradition we do not yet understand in this time and culture. Each of Lleu's ordeals was a test, a trial of wits, and with his uncle guide he succeeded. In any case, when we deal with parental figures who seem to thwart what we want, whether they mean to or not, they are providing a valuable initiation for us. Often living under parental supervision is an ordeal, but one that ultimately makes us stronger, and later on we just might understand the wisdom behind our parents' actions. Lleu also teaches us to find allies in our other family members. If we do not have a rapport with our parents, we might find kinship and mentors in our uncles and cousins, much like Lleu found in Gwydion.

Lugh and Tailtiu

Lugh is the Irish Celtic god whom modern pagans link with the Sun and harvest, and they celebrate him in August, on Lammass or Lughnassadh. Many think of him as another face of the Welsh Lleu. Though their stories are very different, they share many traits and are now both associated as solar, grain, and many-skilled gods.

Lugh started life much like a mortal, living outside of the realm of the gods who were known the Tuatha Dé Danaan, or "Children of the Goddess Danu." The Tuatha were a tribe of Irish gods of myth and legend. Lugh knocked on the door of the wall protecting the home of the Tuatha and proved himself worthy by demonstrating many skills, eventually becoming a leader. His mother, Tailtiu, a gigantic earth goddess, spent all her strength and energy on clearing part of the land of large stones and boulders so crops could be planted and people could eat. The effort was so great that she died, and the harvest feast is really a funeral celebration for her. She loved the world so much that she gave her life so we may be fed, and at Lughnassadh, we honor her with special games and celebrations. Lugh keeps her memory alive through the celebration of Lughnassadh.

Lugh teaches us how to honor our parents when they are no longer physically present. Although we mourn, the Irish style of mourning in the festival of Lughnassadh is a celebration of games and revelry, honoring the joy of our memories of those who have passed. Eventually in modern Wicca, Lugh's solar and grain aspects were emphasized and Lughnassadh, also known as Lammas, became the funeral feast of the grain god.

Rhiannon and Pryderi

Rhiannon is the great goddess of the Celtic otherworld. She is a goddess of horses and birds. Her story is much like Modron's, but far harsher.

Rhiannon was courted by King Pwyll and bore his son on the eve of the holiday known as Beltane. After the exhausting birth, the child was stolen by a giant, who reached his arm into the castle and snatched the newborn. Rhiannon slept through the kidnapping, and her handmaidens felt they would be blamed, so they killed a puppy and smeared its blood on her face and hands, and told the king that Rhiannon had eaten the child. Pwyll could not bear to execute her, but as punishment sentenced her to live like a horse, bearing new visitors into the city on her back and telling them of her supposed crime. Acting like a horse is most likely a remnant of a more primal horse goddess aspect to Rhiannon. Their child was actually dropped by his kidnapper in a stable. The creature tried to steal the foals of another king, and a local man prevented the theft and found the child. This king gave the child to the man and his wife as a reward, since they were childless. The new parents later realized that their adopted son looked like King Pwyll and Queen Rhiannon. The couple returned him and Rhiannon was freed from her imprisonment. She named the child Pryderi, meaning "trouble" or "worry," since his disappearance caused so much of it. Rhiannon left Pwyll and later married the god Mannanan. Rhiannon continued to be supportive of Pryderi and his later adventures. The search for a child lost in the otherworld is always a mythic theme of the search for light, the search for spring, for health, and for life. Pryderi and Rhiannon are really more of a lesson for mothers having troublesome sons, even if that trouble was not Pryderi's fault. Pryderi can remind us how our actions, and even situations that are not our fault, can affect our parents and family. For Pwyll, the lesson is knowing things are more than they appear and learning to trust your spouse over others.

Baldur and Frigga

Frigga is the mother goddess of the tribe of Norse gods named the Aesir.

She had a wonderful child named Baldur, the child of light and the sun. The Norse people, being farther north, truly honored the Sun because it meant protection from the freezing winter ice. It was predicted that Baldur's death would signal the end of the world, so Frigga went to all things in the world, from people to giants to all objects, wood and stone, and made them promise to her, the mother goddess, that they would not harm her son Baldur. All gave their word. She only forgot to make the plant mistletoe promise, as mistletoe seemed harmless enough. The trickster god Loki, in disguise, fooled Frigga into revealing this to him. Then Loki tricked Baldur's brother, Hodur, the old, blind god of winter. All the gods were testing Frigga's magick, throwing things at Baldur, but nothing hurt him. Loki saw Hodur not participating because of his blindness. Loki encouraged him to try, placing a dart of mistletoe in Hodur's hand and guiding his aim. The mistletoe struck Baldur and killed him. Although the gods unsuccessfully tried to resurrect Baldur, his death signaled the end of the age.

Baldur's death is really a symbol for the end of the summer and start of winter, and in each "age" or season, he is reborn again. Some say Frigga then commanded that mistletoe, a poisonous herb, never be used for harm again, and the only thing it could be used for is for lovers to kiss beneath, thus starting that well-known Yule/Christmas tradition of kissing under the mistletoe. Frigga is the archetype of the protective mother, yet gives us the lesson that a mother cannot protect us from everything. She must let go because, despite her best efforts, there are things we need to experience that are not pleasant, but they are a part of our path.

Hephaestus and Hera

Originally thought to be a great sky goddess, Hera's surviving stories usually do not flatter her. In modern television and movies, she is sometimes portrayed as the villain. She is the wife of Zeus, the king of the Olympian Greek gods, and the last versions of their tales are of a quarrelsome marriage, reflecting the state of mind in the later Greek culture. Zeus was constantly cheating on Hera and having many children with other goddesses and mortal women, and Hera took out her frustrations on these stepchildren, such as Hercules and Dionysus. Once Zeus even created a daughter, Athena, without a

woman, having Athena spring directly from his head. Hera sought to do the same and created a son, but at first look, her creation was not flattering to her. Hephaestus was born short in stature, almost dwarflike, and lame, with misshapen feet. Some say Hera cast him out of the gods' home for his imperfections. Other sources say that he tried to stop Zeus and Hera from fighting, and Zeus cast him out with a lightning bolt, maiming him further. In either case, he found refuge below the ocean and earth, making friends with nature spirits and Cyclops, and learning the art of the blacksmith. He cast metals and made fine jewelry. He was creative, artistic, and sensitive, as well as a master builder. He eventually sought revenge on his mother for abandoning him and tricked Hera into accepting a gift of a throne he made. Once she sat in it, the throne bound her like a slave and none could release her. The god of wine, Dionysus, eventually got Hephaestus drunk and brought him to Olympus to free Hera, but he was sober enough to demand both a place of respect on Olympus and a wife in return for Hera's freedom. He was given both, though he had many problems relating to other goddesses, including his "sister" Athena and his eventual wife, Aphrodite. In others versions of the myth, Hephaestus actually helped Zeus give "birth" to Athena—thus making him the older sibling—by splitting Zeus' head open with an axe to release the new goddess. Hephaestus and his divine parents show us the effect that parents and upbringing, or lack of it, can have upon a new son. He had little in the way of healthy role models. Yet in the end, Hephaestus is responsible for himself and his own happiness. His half brother Dionysus can guide him and try to help heal the family relationship, as Dionysus had his own difficulties with his stepmother Hera, but handled it differently. Hephaestus is most often depicted as the master smith, finding his happiness in his Craft, channeling his power into his creations, and he eventually made peace with the other gods, supplying Zeus with his thunderbolts and taking his place as one of the twelve Olympians. Our creative pursuits, the ability to take ideas and bring them into form, be it art, music, or even blacksmithing, is therapeutic and healing.

Taliesin and Cerridwen

Taliesin is not the biological son of the crone goddess Cerridwen. Their legend is Welsh, and although most tell it like a simple story, it is really a story of the Goddess and her re-born son. Named Gwion Bach originally, Taliesin was a servant of Cerridwen and her husband, the giant Tegid. Cerridwen was brewing a potion of divine wisdom for her dark, ugly son, Avaagu. She felt if he could not be loved for beauty, he would be loved for

his wisdom and insight. The potion took a year and a day to make, and she set Gwion Bach to stir it continuously until it boiled down to almost nothing. Symbolically the year represents a period of training, inner and outer, that Gwion undertook in devotion to the Goddess. Just as the potion was ready, three drops flew out of the cauldron to burn Gwion's thumb. He sucked his thumb to ease the pain and thus became all-wise. The rest of the potion turned to poison and cracked the cauldron. Knowing Cerridwen would be very upset, he fled for his safety. The angry goddess followed him, and they began a shape-shifting duel, rapidly changing into different animals to escape. Their journey through the animal kingdom is symbolic of the four elements, and represent a challenge, or initiation, in the four elements. Finally, Gwion turned into a grain of wheat in a pile of grain. Cerridwen became a chicken and ate him. Nine months later, she gave birth to Taliesin. Still furious, but unable to kill him, she cast him out into the water in a tiny leather bag where he was found and adopted by Elphin, who named him Taliesin, meaning "shining brow." Taliesin remembered all the wisdom that the potion granted him, helping his new father and becoming a great bard and magician, advising kings. Many think of Taliesin as an aspect of Merlin. On a superficial level, their relationship symbolizes the difficulties between mother and son, or stepmother and son. On a more mythic level, it is really a story about teacher and student, or initiator and initiate. Some think Avaagu was not a separate figure, but the darker side of Gwion. Gwion was the personal self. Through Cerridwen's trials, Gwion fulfilled his true potential, becoming his divine self Taliesin. Cerridwen, like Arianrhod, reminds us how difficult circumstances and interactions with family member can help us grow into better people.

FINDING THE DIVINE PARENTS

After hearing about these mythic mothers, how is your relationship with your own mother or both your parents? If your parents are not a part of your life at this time, how are things between you and your guardians or family? Most relationships, even with our parents, can have their ups and downs, but problems in your family might seem small after comparing them to some of these mythic stories.

The trick for witches is to see the divine parents, the Goddess and God, as a part of your earthly parents. If people are a creative force like the Goddess and God, then we each have a tiny spark of the gods within us. If we can learn to see the divine in ourselves and in our parents, problems and obstacles become lessened because we see the love and

beauty we have for each other, even when our parents are making us mad. In the most difficult moments we are challenged to see the divine in them.

Sometimes you can feel bad about yourself, too, and in those moments, you have to find the divine god force in yourself and let it sustain you in times of darkness, depression, or anger. As you learn more about the God, you will learn more about what it means to be a man—and a witch—and you will live in the world more comfortably. Male witches usually learn to be very balanced, in touch with both their feminine and masculine energies, as they are in touch with both the Goddess and God.

Exercise: Meditation on the Divine Parents

If you have difficulty with your parents, or if one or both are not present in your life, develop your relationship with the Goddess and God as your divine parents. Even if your relationship with your parents is fine now, build a connection to the divine Mother and Father. For now, start by closing your eyes and talking to them when you are alone and quiet. Talk to them as if they were present. You can do it before bed. I often talk silently in my mind to the Goddess and God while in bed before I go to sleep. In later meditations and rituals, you will learn how to deepen your connection to the Goddess and God.

Exercise: What Is Your Relationship with Your Parents?

In your Book of Shadows, write a journal entry about your parents or guardians. Ask yourself what your relationship is like and how it makes you feel. Think about what you would want to be different. Are your desires reasonable, or are they selfish and unrealistic? What can you do to make things better in your relationship? What could your parents do to make things better? Remember, a relationship runs two ways. Don't think only about the things that you want. How can you help your parents as well? Once you have written these answers and really thought about them, can you talk to your parents about it and deepen your relation with them? If you think they would be open to it, I encourage you to try. Talking always improved things with my parents. Sometimes I was too afraid to talk to them, but when I finally did, it always worked out. In college, as an adult, my relationship with my parents, particularly my father, improved greatly.

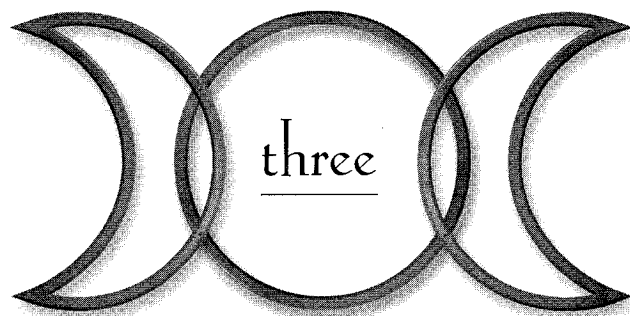
Exercise: Mythic Study

Although witches are intuitive and psychic, we are also scholars who must study the past in order to build our future. We study other cultures, customs, and languages to find the

wisdom that has been lost to us. We especially study mythology to understand the divine and see how people have interpreted the gods over time.

Choose a mother-and-son myth you want to learn in detail. You can choose one from those listed above or find another. Many myths have many versions, so check a few sources. The ones given above are quick, easy, and modern retellings of ancient stories that are, in their original forms, full of rich details and symbolism. Although the Internet is a good starting point, websites are sometimes wrong and do not list their sources, so don't make online searches your only resource. Make this a fun research project. I hate homework when I'm forced to do it, but when the subject involves something I like, it's much easier—and even fun.

When you're done, write out your favorite version of the myth in your Book of Shadows. Reflect on it. See if you can find its lessons and how they apply to your life.



Men's Mysteries: Forgotten Wisdom

When I was growing up, I didn't know what it meant to be a man. It was a difficult time in my life. I was lucky to have a father who loved me and who was living with my mother and me. Most of my friends' parents were divorced, and their fathers were not very involved in their upbringing.

I love my father, but even when I was young, I knew we were very different. His generation was one in which "men were men." He grew up in a world where boys didn't cry and were generally only involved in competitive sports. Men of his time were characterized by being very aggressive or practical. They believed mostly in what their physical senses and logic could tell them, and didn't often see the beauty and magick in the world.

I, on the other hand, was a "sensitive guy," into music, art, poetry, the paranormal, and sci-fi fantasy books. I had few friends, but felt close to them, and I enjoyed hanging out at home. I wasn't popular or competitive—except perhaps with grades—but I

carved my own little space in my high school. I wasn't the typical guy, though, and the gulf between me and my father—my only male role model—seemed too vast.

My dad lived in the world that, to me, seemed stereotypically male, with little individuality. It wasn't until a few years later, when I was grown up, that I realized how many important things my father taught me. Even though we had a hard time communicating when I was in my teens, he taught me about dedication, responsibility, honesty, and personal honor through his words and actions.

I still had to struggle with the idea of being a man. I had to find my own way, without any map or example that suited my interests and ideas. Even when I found Wicca, I struggled with the role of the male in a world filled with priestesses of the Goddess. Not until I started to make a personal relationship with the God as well as the Goddess did I understand the power of men's mysteries.

THE BALANCE OF THE AGES

In the modern age, many people have lost their sense of purpose and identity. We do not live tribally. Tribes have a sense of lineage, history, and ancestry. Tribes have many elders and many caretakers, so you see many different roles and responsibilities in your family. Not everyone gets to be chief but their job is just as vital to the well-being of the tribe, the community. Most people today don't have that sense of purpose to the community, or even see their community as tribe, as extended family. In the modern nuclear family ideal of 2 parents and 2.5 kids, you don't see a variety of roles expressed as you do in tribal society. Even with large extended families, most don't have a lot of daily contact with the extended family. In this situation, your role models are strictly your parents in their defined societal roles. In extended tribal societies or clans, you see warriors, shamans, gatherers, craftsmen, healers, teachers, storytellers, artists, and farmers. You see how their jobs are part of their spiritual calling and service to the tribe. We just have jobs to make money. Most people don't have a sense of spiritual purpose or service in their job. They just do it because they have to. It's expected. So many fall into the "rat race" of modern life, and choose their job based primarily on income. I know that was the path I was on. I decided to be a chemical engineer because I was good at chemistry and I liked it, but I also knew at the time it paid really well. It wasn't until an emotional breakdown in high school that I realized art and music were more my calling. My teachers and friends thought I was crazy to go to school for music with very little formal train-

ing. Thankfully my parents were supportive, even if they thought I was a little crazy too. Music was my calling at the time, and I felt I could express my soul, and help change others, through songs.

Witches often believe that before this current great age was a mythic age of greater equality. It's often called the matriarchal age, but no one really knows for certain if such an age truly passed, because so little evidence remains. Many goddess statues exist, though, and there is evidence of a sophisticated culture that lived during the Stone Age. They didn't live the way we do. They hunted and gathered and lived close to the Earth. These people didn't build cities, but they were complex in other ways, including art, music, and medicine. They seemed to revere the female and the Earth as the embodiment of the divine female. They might have honored the male too. We simply are not certain, But if the world follows cycles, there is a magickal sense that before our current age—what many consider to be a patriarchal or male-dominated age—there was a feminine age or golden age of balance. People look to the myths of Atlantis and Lemuria and say they are fragments of this golden age of miracles. If it was real, this age probably wasn't as perfect as we'd like to think, but it provides us with great inspiration when crafting new ways of living and working in the world.

Something changed. Our cultures changed, but how, we are not certain. Warrior tribes gained power. Myths of goddesses were replaced with those of sky gods. People settled down and instead of relying on the Earth completely, they began to farm and try to control the Earth. Any of these things alone is not necessarily bad. Change is good, but somewhere the honor paid to the Goddess, the female energy, was lost. We entered a patriarchal age of father gods, empires, and, eventually, industrialization. If the feminine were still honored, those changes might have happened in a different way.

Now, we live at the changing of ages. At the end of the patriarchal age, women fought for the right to vote and continue to fight for equal rights with the modern feminist movement. Many are directly responsible for spreading the wisdom of the Goddess and the spirituality of witchcraft within the world. They have been pivotal in the world's civil rights movements, ecological movements, and new social and political movements. Many of their efforts have brought a new way of thinking to the mainstream—Wicca being but one of those new ways. Author and activist Starhawk, author of *The Spiral Dance*, is a leading example of such visionary leaders.

People call this new age the Age of Aquarius. The hallmark of Aquarius is light, and prophecies around the world say this will be an age of light and equality, where ignorance and inequality will disappear like darkness facing a new dawn. It is to be an age of sisterhood and brotherhood, intuition, peace, technological advancement, humanitarianism, and unexpected change. I hope we won't swing too far into matriarchy but instead that we will find a healthy balance where both sexes are honored for their energy and wisdom. Some think of it as the Age of Horus, uniting the qualities of both parents, Isis and Osiris, rulers of the previous ages, to find balance in the coming age.

This age won't magically happen overnight. It is a slowly evolving way of thinking, living, and being. It is only a possibility. We can only make it a reality with the choices we make, with our own thoughts, words, and actions.

MEN IN WICCA

As women have battled to redefine their roles, men and boys have lost their own roles. Again, change is good, but it can leave us a bit confused. We live at the end of the age where men were stereotypical patriarchs, ruling the home or office. That role is collapsing in favor of partnership, but few people have given us healthy examples of balance, compromise, and partnership. Men who are attracted to Wicca understand the importance and sacredness of the Goddess and of women, but unless you grew up in a pagan household, you probably grew up in a culture that didn't honor and respect women the way witches do. Most of our Western culture has been biased against women. Feminist consciousness and equal rights movements are tipping the scales toward balance, and those who have grown up in socially aware circumstances will have those benefits, but those in paganism revere the feminine as the divine source of life. Many pagan creation myths have the Goddess giving birth to the God, giving her a superior or wiser role. Western culture usually assumes the male pronoun for the divine, based on the image of God the father or the son in Christianity. Pagans are more likely to be inclusive of both genders in the divine, to reflect their inclusiveness of both sexes in life, but if a default gender is going to be chosen, most pagans focus on the Goddess.

Some men curious about witchcraft don't pursue their curiosity because they feel witchcraft is too feminine. They fear it will somehow make them too feminine if they become witches. Many traditional covens are run by high priestesses, and some can be as dogmatic as a traditional patriarchal religion. Certain groups of witches completely

focus on the Goddess and never mention the God in any rituals. They are simply exploring other roles and energies that have been almost completely denied in the last two thousand years. I know by the time I got into witchcraft, I was sick of hearing all about God the stern father and his only son. I needed to find another connection to the spiritual, and I needed to explore the Goddess. I found love and comfort in the Goddess and a sense of coming home. It would have been easy to forget completely about the God of Wicca, which is an entirely different way of looking at the male energy than the God of Christianity. Once I realized I needed to heal my connection with male energy, I sought out the God and studied images of Pan, Cernunnos, Apollo, Lugh, and Osiris.

Understandably, those men who don't know that witchcraft is about balance feel they have to be completely submissive and pacified, denying anything they associate with masculinity. They seek out other spiritualities and magick. Many gravitate toward ceremonial magick because for those who don't explore witchcraft, they never learn that although groups of mages are usually male-dominant, not by decree, but by the fact that these mysteries tend to attract more men, they do have much in common with the mysteries of witchcraft. As much of Wicca has focused on the Goddess and the female mysteries, it is not strictly feminine. Witches strive for balance, and they honor the masculine and feminine energies in all people and in all things. Male energy is needed in creation as well as female. God complements Goddess. They are not polar opposites but a pair, a partnership.

Exercise: Exploring Your Own Balance

Many characteristics that we think of as male or female are only thought of that way in our culture. Other cultures may associate different characteristics with masculinity and fem-

The Men of Wicca

Most men don't realize that two of the founders of modern Wicca were male: Gerald Gardner and Alexander Sanders. Many major contributors to witchcraft have been male as well, including Raymond Buckland, a prolific author and the founder of Seax Wica; Stewart Farrar, who along with his wife and priestess Janet, wrote many of the classic books on witchcraft, drawing from the Alexandrian tradition; Scott Cunningham, who empowered many solitaries to fervently study the Craft, even without a traditional coven through his many books, including *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*; Raven Grimassi, one of the world's strongest proponents of Italian witchcraft and preserving the Old Ways in the modern era; Oberon Zell-Ravenheart, the founder of the Church of All Worlds, publisher of *Green Egg* magazine, and sculptor of the masterpiece "Millennial Gaia"; Robert Cochrane, hereditary witch of the Clan of Tubal-Cain and what was later known as the 1734 tradition; Evan John Johns, who continued on the traditions of Cochrane; Carl Llewellyn Weschcke, who helped organize the Council of American Witches and founded Llewellyn Publications; Herman Slater, owner of the nationally known bookstore the Magickal Child in NYC; Ed Buczynski, founder of the New York Welsh tradition of Witchcraft and the Minoan Brotherhood/Sisterhood; Dr. Leo Louis Martello, author, teacher, initiate of the Sicilian
(continued)

(continued)

tradition, and civil rights/gay rights activist; Arnold Crowthers, a contemporary of Gerald Gardner; Gavin Frost, who along with his wife Yvonne founded the Church and School of Wicca; author Ray Malbrough, founder of the First Church of Celtic Wicca; Ed Fitch, author of *Magical Rites from the Crystal Well*; Isaac Bonewits, author of *Real Magic* and founder of *Ar nDraiocht Fèin*, a Druid order; Nigel A. Jackson, author of *The Celtic Oracle* and *Call of the Horned Piper*; author Chas. S. Clifton; Paul Huson, author of *Mastering Witchcraft*; Victor Anderson, who founded the Feri tradition that later influenced Starhawk and the Reclaiming; Gwydion Pendderwen, an initiate and teacher of the Feri tradition who added Welsh material to it; George E. "Pat" Patterson III, one of the founders of the Georgian tradition of witchcraft; Timothy Roderick, author of the critically acclaimed *Dark Moon Mysteries*; Konstantinos, author of *Nocturnal Witchcraft*; Andras Corban Arthen, founder of the Earthspirit Community; Fritz Jung, webmaster of the Witch's Voice website; Gavin Bone, who continues on Stewart Farrar's legacy with Janet Farrar, coauthor of *Progressive Witchcraft* and *The Healing Craft*; A. J. Drew, author of *Wicca for Men*; and Kerr Cuhulain, law enforcement officer and author of *Wiccan Warrior*. Men have always been welcome in Wicca, and priests play a strong role in any group, traditional or eclectic.

inity. Before going any further, make two lists in your Book of Shadows. For the first list, write down all of your masculine traits and abilities. Anything you think of as male, write it down. Then in the second list, write down all your feminine traits. Write anything that comes to mind. When done, review both lists and see how they complement each other.

As you study witchcraft, you will find things we think of as typically male and female are not the same in every part of the world, in every time, and in every culture. In the West, we usually think of traits that are active, direct, aggressive, and mental as masculine, while traits that are passive, receptive, peaceful, and emotional are feminine. Then we come across cultures that have warrior women, like the Greek Amazons or Norse Valkyries. In Hindu myth, the roles can also be switched. Kali is the goddess of war and destruction, while her husband Shiva is the passive force. She dances upon his slumbering body.

Everything, including the gods, is a unique balance of energy. My first teachers called this idea the Principle of Gender: all things have male and female energies.

ROLES OF THE GOD

So in this New Age, we men, particularly men involved in Wicca, must reinvent ourselves. We must find new role models. We can no longer solely be the patriarchal emperors and soldiers in control. We must find balance. So how do we reinvent ourselves? We must look to the past. We call our current time the New Age, but most lore considered New Age is actually very old and is simply reinterpreted to fit our world. So we look to the past and our ancient wisdom to re-examine some of these roles.

When I look at the modern feminist, I see the healthiest feminine role models looking back at the Goddess, back to her images and her stories. I suggest we do the same and

look to the God for healthy ways to be in the world. The images of the God can be found in mythology—the mother-and-son myths in chapter 2, of course—as well as many other places. A lot of images are recorded in the tarot cards. Study of the tarot can be like a course in spirituality, mythology, and psychology. Let's look at some of the male archetypes in this ancient divination system.

Fool

Nobody likes to be called a fool, yet the Fool is my favorite tarot card. The Fool is the child god, entering the world for the first time, full of innocence and optimism. The Fool is young Mabon or Pryderi. The Fool is the adventurer, playing in the world with a sense of wonder and enthusiasm. He skips down the hill with only his knapsack and his faithful dog. Sometimes he has to be careful, but he never lets fear stop the adventure. Like Baldur, many with this energy think they are immune to all harm. Some people, throughout their lives, keep a sense of adventure and optimism. They can seem childish to others who are more serious in life. They are like little kids in their excitement, even though they are all grown up. These people embody the energy of the Fool—even though most don't know it.



Figure 4: The Fool



Figure 5: The Magician

Magician

The Magician follows the Fool in the tarot. A magician, also known as a mage or magus, is one who has used knowledge of the universe to change things. A magician can fuse his desire with the energy of the universe and make magick. Many are scholars and take a long time learning about the world. Magicians are good with words, often being writers and speakers. Most magician gods use their abilities to help others, much like a shaman or witch would help the tribe.

Thoth is the wise magician god of Egypt. He had the power of creation, yet he used his wisdom to advise the others gods, such as Ra and Horus. He helped Isis in her journey. He didn't seek power for himself. Merlin the Magician advised King Arthur wisely. Although he was powerful enough to rule Camelot himself, he didn't. He was a caretaker and connector of people. Although we think of Merlin as the old wizard, a lot of the lesser known literature depicts him as a youth with the gift of prophecy. Taliesin used his magick to reveal the truth and help those deserving. Hermes is the Greek messenger god. He kept the lines of communication open for the other gods and gave gifts of knowledge to humanity. The Norse god Odin sacrificed much to gain his knowledge and power and tried to use it to protect his people from destruction. He passed his

knowledge of the runes to the world of mortals. Any time people try to get in touch with their powers—the power of the mind, word, or magick—they are embodying the magician, and the magician's example is to use power for the good of all.

Warrior

When we use the word “warrior,” we often confuse it with “soldier,” but the two are very different. Soldiers simply follow orders, while a true warrior is one on a spiritual path, with his own code of ethics and honor. Spiritual warriors fight only in self-defense and to protect their people. Our first image of the warrior is the hunter, who would risk his life to bring back meat for his people to eat so they would not starve. Animal gods are the patrons to hunters, and in ancient times, animals were killed and eaten with respect and gratitude. The romantic image of the knight is one of a true spiritual warrior. Sworn to protect king and country, the knight is really vowing to protect the land, which is the Goddess, and the king, who is the Goddess' champion. The arena of the warrior is not one solely for men. We must acknowledge the power of our warrior sisters and know that it is all of our duty to help and defend the whole tribe. With the romantic image of the knight and king it's easy to want to put women as a whole on a “shelf,” like a princess in need of rescue, and prevent them from doing anything dangerous. Paganism acknowledges a rich history of warrior women and leaders.

Many of our mythic figures contain warrior aspects. Horus continued to fight to uphold the legacy of Isis and Osiris, and he prevented his harmful uncle from ruling Egypt. He is a warrior god. The Norse god Tyr sacrificed his hand to a wolf monster, Fenris, so the other gods could chain it up and prevent it from harming anyone else.

Some cultures called their shamans and witches warriors because these shamans and witches used their abilities to fight illness and to prevent misfortune from befalling the tribe. Modern-day warriors include martial artists and members of the military. Activists in the environment, civil rights, politics, and the global economy are also warriors. Peace activists, including those who set the example in the late 1960s “Summer of Love,” as well as heroic figures like Gandhi, are peaceful warriors. Gandhi won his battle without harming anyone with a weapon. Anyone who defends another person, land, or idea with integrity is part warrior.

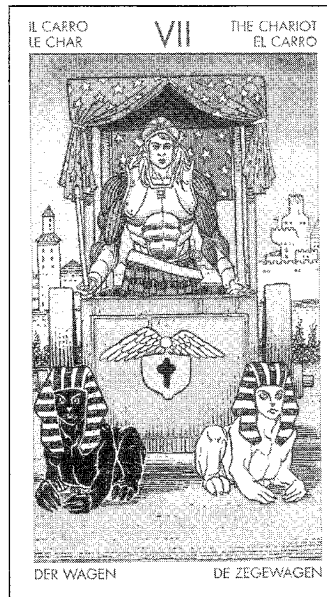


Figure 6: The Chariot

Questing Knight

An extension of the warrior is the questing knight. In the stories of King Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table were sent out seeking the Holy Grail. Though later thought to be an exclusively Christian symbol, the Holy Grail is originally a symbol of the Goddess. Its power was to restore the land and the relationship between the king and the goddess of the land. All the knights went out seeking, and many men in this world are also seekers, continually on a quest to understand and embody the spiritual. The god Lleu was continually questing, first for a name, then weapons, and finally a bride. His mother's curses made him seek out his identity and happiness with his uncle's aid.

Questing knights are not as optimistic and easygoing as the Fool, but they have drive and determination, though they are not sure where to find the wisdom they seek. They are driven by their mission. These grail knights are shown in the tarot as the Chariot card—a knight who contemplates, meditates, and seeks to understand before traveling on to the next quest. It is truly a spiritual quest. You can also see knights in the court cards of the tarot. Some decks call them the knights, while others call them princes. They are the young men, often shown on horseback, in each of the four suits.

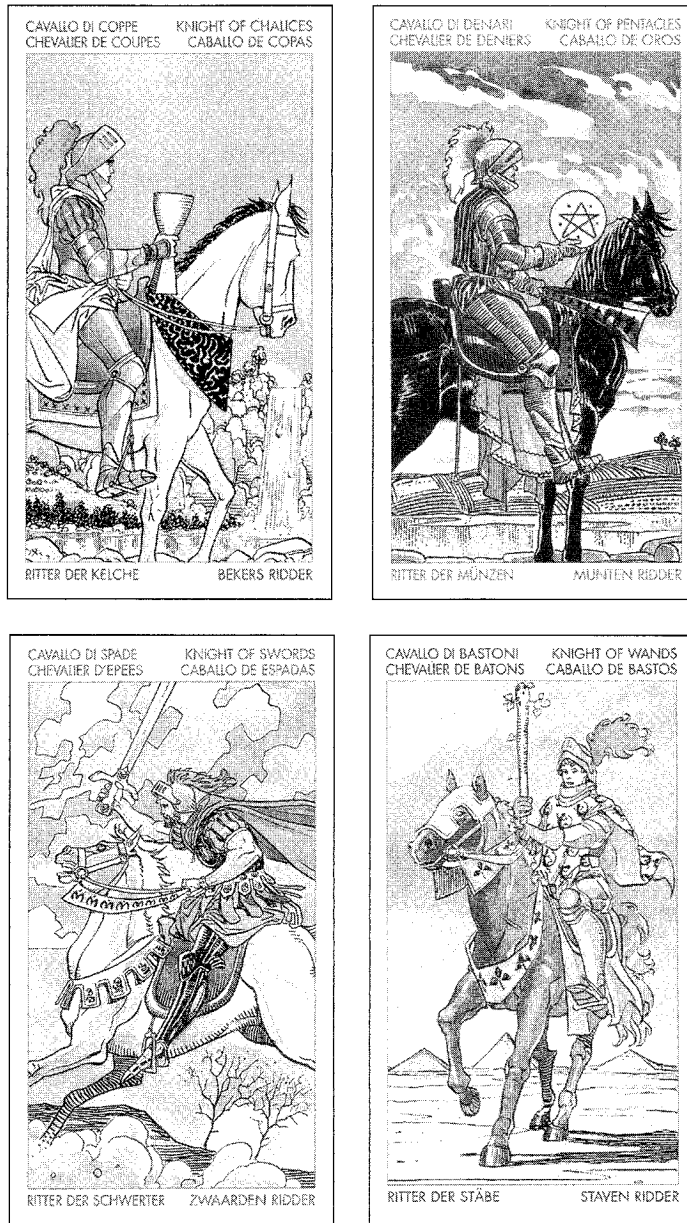


Figure 7: Knights



Figure 8: Temperance

Artist

Art, music, and craftsmanship are gifts from the gods in most cultures' creation stories. The gods held the arts of creation and gave these talents to humanity. Creativity is a way to understand your divinity. When you are in the moment of creation, you are like a god. The gods created the world, so when we create, we understand their point of view a little bit better.

Apollo and Hermes are Greek gods of music and the arts, among many other attributes. Their relative Hephaestus, known as Vulcan in Roman myth, is the god of the forge and blacksmiths. He made both jewelry and mechanical inventions, including Zeus' lightning bolts and the armor of other gods and goddesses. Goibhniu is a Celtic smith god with similar powers. Taliesin used music, song, and poetry in his magick to create change. His magick is intimately tied to sound. Lugh was the craftiest of the gods, having many skills and talents, including being a poet, blacksmith, and shoemaker. Anubis never followed his sibling Horus as a warrior, but he aided Osiris in the arts of the dead with embalming rituals.

In the tarot, I look to the Temperance card. Some decks even call it the Art or Alchemy card. It depicts an angelic figure mixing energies to create something new. Art is the inner alchemy that changes the artist as well as the audience. Through bringing together the inner elements, one "tempers" the inner steel, forging the new self. Anyone who finds himself and the divine through creating something else embodies the artist.

King

In our modern world of democracy, kings are often frowned upon. Considering what kings have turned into, I agree, but certain aspects of the witch god are often described as a king. Some look to him as a sky king, mountain king, or tribal warlord, but he is most often considered a ruler. The most ancient role of a king, however, is very different from that of a petty tyrant. Kings are servants to their people and servants to the Goddess. Their job is to take care of the kingdom. They are warriors on a greater scale. These kings are responsible and must fulfill their job with honor. Only the corrupted warrior, who can only protect through absolute control, or one who seeks power solely for himself, becomes the tyrant. The divine kings work with the land and the Goddess. They act as fathers, guides, and teachers for their subjects. In ages past, a king had to be wise and spiritual as well as being a strong warrior. A king had to be a man of peace but also be prepared to take action. When meditating or doing ritual, many witches find the energy of the God to be gentle and sensitive or powerful and fierce as needed, embodying the dual nature of a good king.

King Arthur is a legend of an earthly king who eventually failed in his task, causing his Camelot to fall. Yet there is the promise of renewal. Horus is a divine king who defeated his uncle Set and became pharaoh to Egypt like his father Osiris. Lugh is another warrior who eventually claimed responsibility and leadership of his tribe.

The king can be found in the Emperor card of the tarot, as well as the kings of pentacles, wands, swords, and cups.



Figure 9: The Emperor



Figure 10: Kings

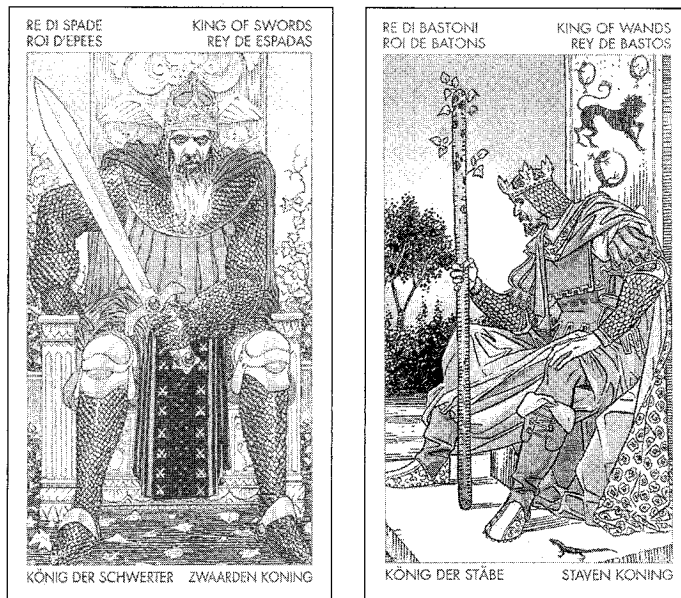


Figure 10: Kings (continued)

Exercise: Finding Your Role

All men will have the chance to embody all of these images in the courses of their lives, but at specific times in your life, you may identify with one particularly strongly. They will change as you change and grow, but for now, what image suits you the best? Is there another image for you that is not listed? In your Book of Shadows, write about your image and how it applies to you. What does it teach you? How does it help you? Is this the role you want now? What role do you want to have and what are you doing to move toward it?

HONORING THE GODDESS

With these new images of being a man, we can see how the God honors the Goddess. Being a male witch is not just about being a man, but how our role can serve the community and how it helps others. The community, in tribal times, looked to the feminine and the Goddess. The community nurtures, heals, and protects, raising the young to adulthood.

Male witches, from boys to men, must honor the Goddess, including the Goddess within the women around them, such as mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, wives, and daughters. Each is a representative of the Goddess. A powerful Wiccan teaching asks "Do you want to see the Goddess?" then look into the eyes of your mother, sister, wife, or daughter and see the Goddess. The same applies for the God in all men. We must respect the women as part of the divine, but that doesn't mean we don't honor our own voices and opinions. Fortunately, most women in my life have been very wise, and I've learned to recognize their wisdom. For some of us, it is like our regular world has brainwashed us over hundreds of years, telling us that women are not equal. Only in the last hundred years have the tides started to change, but there is still a lot of lingering sexism in the world; we must get deprogramed.

I was raised by a mother who was grounded more in an Old World sensibility rather than the ideas of the modern feminist movement. She raised me with a sense of chivalry and manners—gentlemen opened doors for ladies, let them pass first, and in general deferred to them. As I progressed in the pagan world, some took my sense of chivalry as patronizing. Some felt I wasn't recognizing my fellow Craft sisters as warriors, priestesses, and equals. That wasn't my intention at all, and because of my mother I had a tremendous respect for women, but I had to learn how to express that respect in different contexts. A sense of manners, of chivalry, played to my sense of being the questing knight, but I had to find the fine line between putting my sisters on a pedestal, not letting them get their hands dirty, and following their lead and authority as powerful priestesses in the Craft. When you think how women were really treated in chivalrous times of the knights, you see that women's lives were actually quite restricted and regulated. That has no place in the New Age.

For me, I eventually learned to apply my sense of chivalry equally to all—both men and women—particularly recognizing and deferring to elders, also of both sexes. That way, I am acting honorably without implying inequality. If all people treated all others with a sense of honor and respect, regardless of gender, we would create a wonderful world. So I learned to hold the door for everyone, female and male—and I learned to enjoy it when a man or woman holds the door for me.

Once men learn to understand and respect the Goddess energy around them, we must learn to find and honor the Goddess energy within ourselves. One of the keys is balance. Try this Sun and Moon exercise for finding balance and discerning the sacred within both the God and Goddess. Most witches think of the Sun as the God and the Moon as the Goddess.

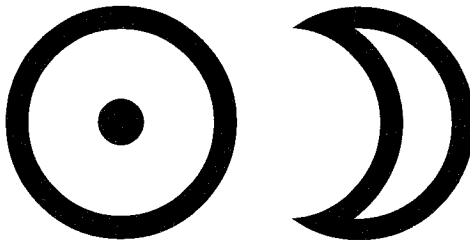


Figure 11: *The Sun and Moon*

Exercise: Sun and Moon Meditation

During the day, sit down somewhere quiet. If you can go outside, that's great. If you can't, this meditation will still work. Close your eyes and breathe deeply twelve times. There are twelve months in the solar year, like the twelve zodiac signs. Then imagine the Sun above your head. Feel the light of the Sun rain down upon you and enter your crown—the top of your head. Feel the energy flow down your neck and into your chest. Imagine in your chest, at your heart, is a miniature sun. It ignites with this energy from above. As above, so below. Feel the love of the Sun and the God in your body. Feel it fill your entire body, all your muscles and bones. The Sun brings out God qualities, such as vitality, strength, and clarity.

When you are done, feel the sunlight in your body drain through your legs and down into the ground beneath you. If you are inside, it flows down through the floor and the walls, until it reaches the earth below. Take a few moments to re-orient yourself back to normal consciousness.

During the night, near the Full Moon, sit quietly. Again, if you can go outside and see the Moon, that's great, but if not, do it inside. You can spend a few minutes looking out a window at the Moon before you sit down. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for thirteen breaths. Thirteen is the number

What about the Devil?

A strong male image in witchcraft is the Horned God. Because of a lot of propaganda, most associate the witch's horned god with the Christian image of the Devil. Many people believe witchcraft is Satanism, but they have little to do with each other. By his nature, people who believe in and follow the Devil believe in Christian cosmology—with Heaven, Hell, sin, and judgment. Witches' beliefs predate the rise of most Christian mythology. We witches don't believe in an absolute good god eternally opposing an evil entity who tempts us into sin. Even though it's not emphasized as much by modern Christians, this conflict, with roots in ancient Iranian dualistic religions such as Zoroastrianism and some forms of early gnostic Christianity, is part of the core theology of institutionalized Christianity. Those who feel witchcraft is evil notice a striking resemblance the Devil has—with his horns and hooves—to the Greek horned god Pan or the Celtic god Cernunnos. They are only similar because church officials, who wanted the followers of the Old Religion to renounce their faith and follow Christianity, said the pagan gods were devils and demons, tricking people into worshipping them. The Christian personification of evil and temptation was created from a fusion of the pagan horned gods with figures in Jewish myth including Satan, Lucifer, and the snake from the Garden of Eden. From this colorful slew the image of the Devil was born.

(continued)

(continued)

Witches don't believe in the Devil—or any other source of ultimate evil and temptation, for that matter. We believe you must be responsible for your own actions. The divine is like nature: it can be creative and destructive, but it is not entirely good or evil. The greatest evil can come from the actions of humans, not supernatural entities. The only Devil associated with witchcraft will be found in the tarot cards. The Devil card often means domination, where you give up control to another. In the traditional version of this card you can see that the characters could take off their chains easily at anytime. The Devil is not forcing them to do anything. For whatever reason, they choose not to be free. Archetypally, the Devil figure actually teaches us liberation. The card is really about self-imposed limitations. Witches believe you have the power to change your situation.



Figure 12: The Devil

of months in a lunar year. Imagine the Moon above you. Feel the silver light slowly dripping down, like honey, until it flows into your crown. It fills your head, neck, and chest. In your belly, it glows like a silver ball, a moon within you. Feel the love of the Moon and the Goddess in your body. Feel it

fill your entire body. The Moon brings out Goddess qualities, such as peace, awareness, and intuition.

When you are done, feel the moonlight in your body drain through your legs and down into the ground below, again moving through any building and reaching the earth below.

RITUALS OF MEN

Not too long ago, I remember reading the Sandman comic book series, and in one issue, a man in an African tribe took a boy who was coming of age out into the desert. There, he found a piece of glass and began to tell a story. He was telling one of his tribe's men's

stories. It was a story for boys to become men, and it was not shared with women. The women had their own stories, not for men to know. I read that and thought, *No one took me out into the desert; no one told me stories*. That's what I needed, a passing of history and of the ways of living, from one man to another.

Tribal people have always had these mysteries. They have initiations of boys into manhood and girls into womanhood. Women still have the mystery of menstruation and can share that special knowledge with their daughters and nieces. Boys don't have that physical passage that requires conversation and a transfer of wisdom from generation to generation. Some use a conversation explaining sex and procreation as a rite of passage, and it is, but it often lacks the depth of spiritual mystery in favor of explaining the mechanics of sex. Many parents don't know how men are supposed to teach their sons and nephews, so they ignore the job and let television and movies be the only distorted guides they have.

Magickal people have rituals as well. Witches are initiated into traditions and covens. Initiations are rebirths, magickal awakenings where the mysteries of life, death, and magick are taught. Witches have rites of passages, from child blessing to coming of age to marriage, but unless you grow up in a pagan family, you don't get exposed to them, and even if you did, you wouldn't understand them in quite the same way. Other traditions, religious and secular, have similar rights of passage. Yet, in paganism they are different. If you are drawn to paganism, then these rituals will have a deeper meaning for you, different from the traditional world's rituals. To a witch, each is filled with a magickal current, a deep mystery and meaning. Although I went through the traditional rites of Catholicism, they felt empty to me. Nobody really explained the meaning, and even when they did later in life, it didn't resonate with me. It didn't have quite the same magickal power that I now see in the rites of witchcraft. Many pagan parents don't want to force their religion onto their children, so they don't use any rituals until their children are old enough to decide their religion for themselves. Paganism can be a tough path, and although it's much more widely accepted today than ever before, there are still many who face discrimination and ridicule because of their path. Pagan parents facing such biases themselves often don't want to put their own kids through it unless the children are old enough to decide on their own to walk the path.

Other pagan parents raise their children as pagans, with pagan holidays and rites of passage, making magick a part of everyday life. They teach their children pagan beliefs and ideas, but most have the flexibility to allow their kids to explore all faiths.

Regardless of religion, people need rituals to help them move from one phase of life to another. Rites of passage don't have to be religious, but they should be spiritual and connect you to your ancestors and history.

Here are some ways that traditional male rituals are expressed in our modern world.

Hunting Rituals

Tribes often sent their young men out alone on a first hunt as a rite of passage. Other warriors would first teach him the art of hunting and pass along the traditional stories in preparation for this symbolic passage from boy to man.

Most modern guys have an abundance of energy in their teen years and seek an outlet for it. I know I did. But unless you feel called to sports, which is another realm of the warrior, you may be out of luck. Modern education has us sitting down for most of the day, when we really need some time to move around. Even adult men don't have an outlet for this drive. Thus, one corruption of the hunting rituals has been vandalism. We seek to leave our mark, particularly with things like graffiti. Though I personally find a lot of graffiti beautiful and magickal, I wouldn't want it on the side of my home or car. We seek a modern hunting party, from our school cliques of guys who are like us, to more serious involvement in gangs. Gangs often have initiation rites like a tribe or magickal group. All are seeking to create a sense of unity, a sense of bonding and belonging that is sorely lacking, but gangs create an unhealthy outlet for our struggle with the modern world.

Modern hunting rituals can be camping trips and survival in the wild with an experienced camper. Though I'm not an experienced camper and came to it later in life, I look at such experiences as an adventure—a trial by fire of sorts, to see if I can handle the unknown. If possible, plan a camping adventure with someone else. If you are an experienced camper, perhaps you will act more as the mentor. If not, find someone who can teach you their skills. Like the questing knight or the Charioteer, be as involved in the preparation as possible. Find the magick of nature and the magick within yourself. You can ritualize the process even more (to increase the rite's significance) by adding aspects of storytelling, the sacred quest, or even tribal markings.

Storytelling

Mythology is not just a bunch of made-up stories. They may not be literally true, but they give us reasons and ideas for why things are the way they are. In the past, boys would learn the stories of the first people, the first men, and what they did to survive. Boys would aspire to realize the legends of warriors, wizards, and kings. They had mythic inspiration to inspire them to manhood. Schoolbook history doesn't serve the same purpose, and most teachers look at mythology as fiction, not as sacred stories.

We have lost our mythological identity, but in this interconnected and technologically advanced world, all mythologies are available to us in one form or another, if we will only look. And although they do not get the same respect that myths do, many of our movies and books have mythic qualities to them. Books and movies like *Harry Potter*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Star Wars* carry the symbolic truths found in the myths of Camelot, Hercules, or Gilgamesh. I suggest looking for wisdom in both the modern and ancient stories.

Sacred Quest

Like the first hunt, a young man could be given a task that must be completed to mark passage into adulthood. Not all are suited to the task of first hunt as not all of us are warriors or athletes, but all can undergo some sort of sacred quest based on our own abilities and calling. Some native traditions have the young man go on his first vision quest, spending a day and night in a sacred place fasting and "crying for a vision" to meet his first spirit guide or totem animal. The sacred quest could be a journey of another kind. Other sacred quests could be a special project, such as a work of art or a personal achievement. The art should symbolize the change from childhood to adulthood. The quests have to be difficult, challenging, but not impossible. Perhaps a traditional vision quest should not be undertaken without an appropriate teacher, but there is a variation in modern witchcraft, a vigil that can be safely done once you learn more about meditation and ritual in chapters 4 and 6. The time from sunset to sunrise is sacred and magickal. Choose an intention for your sacred quest, from requesting a vision or message to guide you, to finding your magickal name or spirit animal guide. Create a sacred space through ritual, lighting candles, incense, or anything else to set the mood, and meditate. The trial is to keep the vigil without falling asleep, to keep focused on your goal, and to allow the experience to happen. Traditional vigils usually require abstinence from food, though bathroom breaks are permitted.

Even before I learned magick, I would sporadically have such vigils, moved by my creative pursuits. I would lock myself away, asking not to be disturbed while I feverishly worked on a song or painting. Though I was always creating, those vigil-born pieces were the most important, really teaching me something about myself.

Tribal Markings

After undergoing a big change, many tribes would mark young men to show that they've changed. Piercings or even tattoos are potential markings, though these marks may not be appropriate for you at this time. I know my tattoo was a rite of passage, an initiation rite into adulthood. Wearing a special piece of jewelry, such as a ring or necklace, is common in witchcraft initiations. It is a sign of both change and newfound responsibility. Necklaces can be worn under clothing so no one else has to see them. In family traditions, family heirlooms, ritual tools, or clothing can be passed as a sign of adulthood. Markings and jewelry can come as a reward after completing your test or quest. They can also be symbolic of the promise you are making to yourself and the gods on this path. Markings can also be added to future rituals, using makeup and theatrical paint to mark symbols and images that symbolically are your magickal intentions.

Exercise: Visualizing Yourself as Your Ideal Man

Witches project their thoughts out into the universe to create their futures. Some people think of it as the power of positive thinking. Others call it creative visualization. Most people, however, don't take the time to think about and create the type of person they wish to be. They simply let it happen. Although we may always change our minds along the way, we should take the time to reflect on the qualities we wish to have as we grow older.

Find a quiet place to meditate, and take a few deep breaths to relax. Close your eyes and imagine a mirror before you. Imagine looking into the mirror and seeing yourself as a full adult. That might mean different things to different people. Some think of voting age as adult age—eighteen in America. Others think of drinking age as adulthood—often twenty-one. I think of adulthood in terms of astrology, and my teacher thought you were not fully a “cosmic adult” until age twenty-nine. In any case, visualize yourself becoming an adult. How do you want to look? More importantly, how do you want to feel? How do you want to think and believe? What kind of witch do you want to be? In

your mind, ask the Goddess and God for aid and their blessing, and let the image take form. Feel the qualities you wish to develop.

Hold the image for a bit, and when you are done, imagine stepping into the mirror, merging with your future self. Then let the mirror and image fade away. Thank the Goddess and God and write down your experience in your Book of Shadows.

MANHOOD

So what is adulthood anyway? Becoming a man is taking more responsibility for yourself and, at the same time, giving back to the community. Though we lack the sense of tribal identity, modern men must think of the world village and all of humanity as our tribe in this New Age.

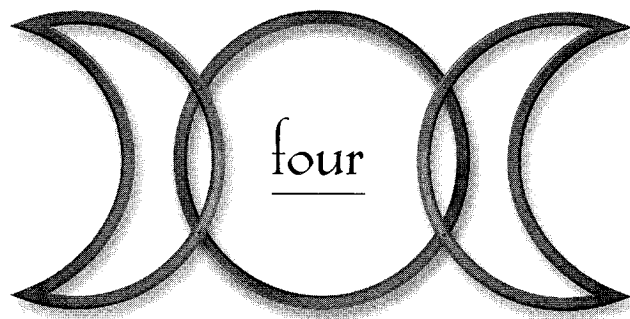
As we come into manhood, it will be our responsibility to help others know what it means to be men in healthy, positive, Goddess-reverent ways. We can look to the men in our lives and those in the world whom we admire to be our role models.

Those adult role models in our lives needn't always be fathers or mothers. Notice that many of our young gods had difficulties with parents but often had an uncle or stepfather who influenced them. Arthur rescued Mabon. Horus was mentored by both the spirit of his father from the underworld and the wise god Thoth. Anubis was not recognized by his "father," Set, and sought wisdom from his biological father-uncle, Osiris. Lleu was guided by his wizard uncle, Gwydion. Hephaestus made friends with the nymphs and Cyclops who became his support system. Taliesin was adopted by Elphin after being rejected by Cerridwen. We have allies all around us. All we need to do is be open to them.

If possible, look for your own role models—your own "wizard uncles"—to help you on this journey. If they can share this book with you, they are remarkable and open. If they are not open to it, they can still be great influences in your life. They can be your guide, mentor, and friend in other areas of life. They can be someone to talk and listen to when you feel others don't understand.

The rest of this book is filled with exercises and rituals that can help you come into your own power. Sometimes it is helpful if you have an in-person mentor, but you still can do the exercises and rituals on your own. As you go through the book, it may bring up feelings that can be hard to understand, and it can help to have someone to talk to. If you can't find anyone around you, seek out counselors or support groups in school and

community centers. This may sound silly, but sometimes these people can be very helpful in tough times. School groups also give you the chance to share your experiences and knowledge with your peers. Throughout this process, remember we all have things to share. We all have innate wisdom that wants to come out. I remember someone in the Native American tradition telling me that his people believe that, in this last age, our elders are returning to this world as our children, fully awakened. I have to say I've met quite a few amazing teens, and I agree. Modern New Age philosophy calls such people Indigo children, though there are a lot of mixed-up notions that go along with this Indigo idea. In the end, it doesn't matter what your age is or how much magickal ability you have; if you speak with respect and wisdom, people will respect you in return. I've started teaching early in my life and, strangely, find myself teaching my elders in their fifties and sixties. The experience is an honor and very humbling. Share your wisdom when asked, and always take the time to listen to others.



Meditation Magick: The Power of Stillness

If you want to open up the door to magick, you need the key. The key to true magick is meditation. I thought I could just get a spell book, say the magick words, and—poof!—my dreams would come true. Not so. The magick is not in the spell itself. Magick is not like chemistry. Just because you mix the right things together doesn't guarantee success. Magick is creating change, but the change is occurring in the inner world as well as the outer world. Magick is clarity, intention, and will. We live in a world where it's hard to get a clear sense of who we are and what we want. But this is the heart of magick. The heart of magick is in stillness, in quieting the mind. So we learn to meditate to find our magickal hearts and wills.

THE GIFTS OF MEDITATION

When I started, I thought meditation was boring. What's the big deal about sitting alone in a darkened room and breathing deeply? I wanted candles, incense, and potions, but

the more I meditated, the more I understood my own path within witchcraft. Now I think meditation is one of the most important parts of witchcraft. A regular meditation practice was one of the most healing parts of my journey. When I started to meditate daily while in college, not only did I notice the difference in the way I felt, but other people did too. I had greater health and stamina. My immune system improved and I didn't get sick as often, my hay fever almost disappeared, and my shy nervousness around people melted away into a steady self-assured manner. My grades improved. My music and art became more fluid. I enjoyed myself more because I learned to be in the moment rather than worry about what I had done, what was coming next, or what people were thinking of me. I had a confidence to tackle my life head on. Many of my problems at the time were due to the fact I couldn't face myself and my issues. Meditation took me out of the moody reflections where I felt helpless, and gave me tools to transform my thoughts and feelings. Instead of struggling against them, I was working with them, processing them, and letting go of what held me back. I didn't wave a wand and make them disappear, but I learned that emotion is energy, and through meditation we can control our energy.

Witches and other mystical people—from magicians to yogis and even mystical Christians—meditate for a lot of reasons. Common among all these reasons is the belief that meditation quiets the mind. All our jumbled thoughts get sorted out. The thoughts we think when we are stressed, afraid, or angry are gently released. By quieting the mind, we find a sense of inner peace, and to find our peaceful centers is the true magick. Not only do we need to find that stillness for rituals and spells, but if you can get to your peaceful center in times of stress, very little will bother you.

Practice your meditation techniques in daily life. If someone says or does something that upsets you, you don't have to react immediately. You can take a deep breath, remember your meditation skills, and answer them from a peaceful, centered place. It doesn't mean you don't speak your mind or stand up for yourself. I used to think spiritual people never got angry or spoke up. They do. But spiritual people try not to respond from anger or hate. They take a moment to see things more clearly, and they respond to trouble more effectively. Two angry people don't solve many problems until at least one of them calms down.

People who meditate notice more. The peaceful and quiet mind encourages witches to listen. We listen to the songs of nature and the world around us and appreciate their

beauty. We also listen to the inner voice, the voice of our soul, our guidance. Good teachers help students connect to this inner voice, this inner teacher. This voice will have all the answers you need, beyond any book or person.

Clarity and inner guidance help us focus the will—the intention—to create magick. If you cannot focus your will, your spells will be less effective. Will is the power behind the magick wand. The wand simply directs your intention with power and precision. Your will is the key to making magick. Associated with the element of fire, will is your drive, your passion, your desire. You explore your will through magick, to learn what your path is. What are you here to manifest? The will is expressed in the tarot through the suit of wands, yet every tarot reader explains the wands differently. Some describe the suit as career. Others look to sex. Some see wands as art, music, or spirituality. It is your passion, your drive, that directs you in creating your life.

Many people have lives that are not what they desire or enjoy because they are not clear with their will. They haven't understood it, explored it, or learned to express it. Meditation helps you contemplate your will and discard intentions that are not important or that are self-destructive, so you can focus on creating your magickal life. Will is often differentiated with a small *w* and a capital *W*. The lowercased word "will" refers to your personal will, your personal desires. They are not bad. Magick encourages you to look at your desires, because in your drive you will find your uppercased word "Will," or what is known as your True Will or Magickal Will. This is your life's purpose and path. What are you here to do or create in the world? True Will is different from the concepts of destiny or fate. The word "will" implies a conscious decision to act upon it. True Will simply doesn't happen without any effort on your part. Most witches don't really believe in destiny or fate as absolutes. Though the divine can lead you to many situations, you must choose to participate, and how you participate is up to you. Fulfilling your True Will is any magician's highest form of magick.

THE BASICS

The word "meditation" means a lot of things, but basically, it means "to contemplate," "to think about something and focus your mind on it." In focusing your mind, you alter your brainwaves. Literally, your brain changes out of your day-to-day functioning mode and enters a mode with a deeper sense of awareness. For some, it is like flipping a switch in your brain, but it takes practice to do easily.

Grounding

Sometimes you will feel lightheaded or funny after a meditation. You may be ungrounded. Ungrounded means your spirit is not fully anchored in your body or in the world. So you must ground it back. To do this, I bring both hands over my head, palms facing down, and sweep them down over my face, neck, chest, and belly, pushing out with my palms facing outward. I do this three times. This act sweeps away any unwanted energies and returns your own energy points—your chakras (more on these in a bit)—to a normal level in order to function in the physical world. Then, I press my hands down into the floor to really anchor myself. If I still feel ungrounded, I imagine I have great roots coming out of my feet and going into the earth. If that doesn't do it, my last resort is to eat a little bit. Eating brings your energy into the digestive system and forces you to be more grounded in the material world.

Eastern meditation focuses on clearing the mind of unwanted thoughts. Western meditation—including the meditations in magick and witchcraft—uses guided images and feelings. Both give your mind something to focus on, but one is more passive and the other more active. Witchcraft meditations are also called guided meditations, pathworkings, visualizations, self-hypnosis, or journeys.

Meditation is much like daydreaming, but more focused and directed. Both witches and scientists call this an alpha state, based on your brainwave activity. Some people find meditation very easy to do, and some find it very hard, but it is important. It also gets easier with practice. At first you feel like you are using your imagination or making things up, but soon the experience takes on a life of its own. Simply go with the flow and let it happen. The more you worry, the more difficult it will be. Learn to relax.

To start, get comfortable. I like a dark room, but some people find a completely dark room too scary, so do what feels right for you. Sit in a position that you can stay in for a short time, perhaps ten to twenty minutes. Start out slowly and meditate for longer periods as you get experienced.

I suggest sitting in a hard-backed chair, feet flat on the floor, and hands in your lap. You can also sit crosslegged on

the floor or a pillow and rest your hands on your knees. Make sure to keep your back straight and supported. Some forms of meditation have you lie down, but most people fall asleep if they lie down, especially if they lie down in bed, so I don't suggest it. Whatever position you choose, you will soon associate it with meditating, and it will help you get into meditation mode when you sit in it. We already associate lying in bed with sleeping, so you don't want to mix up your body signals.

To “flip the switch” and get into meditation mode, I take a few deep breaths and count down. There are a lot of different types of countdowns, but I usually count slowly from twelve to one backward, counting one number for each breath. Then I rest for a moment and feel how peaceful my body is. If I think I need to go deeper, I count my breaths again, but start at thirteen and work down to one. You can count down and then

do any of the exercises in this chapter or any other meditations you find.

Once I am in my meditative state, I do any exercises I have planned. Sometimes it is hard to do meditations on your own, and it can help to have someone guide you or to use meditation CDs. My book *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft: Magick, Meditation, and Psychic Development* has a four-CD meditation companion that guides the listener through meditations.

Though most meditations focus on visuals, some people don't see things well, but they can learn to sense them more generally. If a meditation exercise says "See a tree," you might not literally see the tree in your mind's eye, but you maybe be able to use your imagination to sense it in other ways. Pretend you are touching it. You can hear the wind in its branches. You can smell the fresh air around you. Make it real, even without visualizing. When you feel it's real, you will take the next step in sensing things psychically.

Some people see psychically. Some hear. Others touch, taste, smell, or just know. Knowing, trusting your intuition, is the most important one of them all, but it's easy to want what you feel you are lacking. Those who see things in meditation often want to hear. Those who hear things want to see. But you will get what is the best thing for you, and other senses will develop over time. The message and experience is more important than how it comes to you.

When I'm done meditating, I count up again, but a little quicker than my breathing. I count from one to thirteen, rest a moment, and then count one to twelve. When I am done counting, I open my eyes and stretch, grounding as needed.

INSTANT MAGICK

Instant magick combines meditation with spells. Spells are a method of sending your intention, your desired result, into the universe to manifest as reality. The change can occur in your inner reality, or outer reality. Most spells are performed through ritual.

The Inner Coach

When we start meditating, most of us have an inner voice that tells us that this is silly or stupid or that we can't do it. That's our inner skeptic, and while a healthy dose of skepticism is always good, when it starts to become our inner critic before we even try out a new idea, it becomes a problem.

You can transform that inner critic into an inner coach. When meditating, pretend that critic part of your mind is your teacher or guide. Tell yourself to relax. Use this part of your mind to count down from twelve to one to get into a meditative state. Tell yourself encouraging thing such as, "Yes, you are doing a good job," or, "With each number, you are going deeper. Good. Relax and go deeper." These may sound like silly self-help affirmations, but if you start programming your mind to say those things, it will drown out the critic and replace him with a coach.

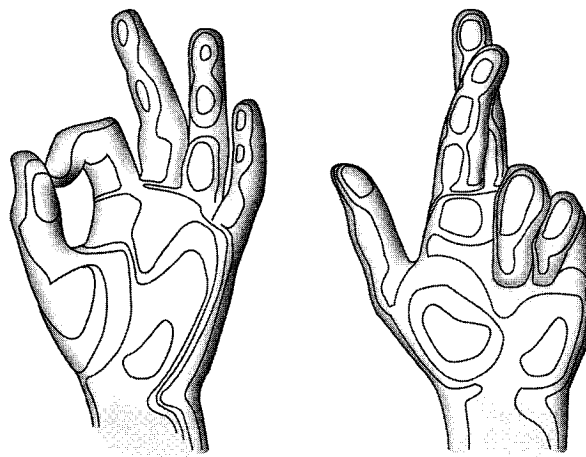


Figure 13: Hand Triggers

Ritual words, movements, and tools help launch your intention out into the universe to manifest. Rituals are like a technology to aid you in your manifestation. Instant magick spells use an inner ritual technology rather than outer tools and movements. For these spells, you don't need any altar or tools. You simply get into your meditative state and hold a clear *intention* of your desired result. You can say a positive statement—an affirmation of your goal—in your mind. You can visualize the result in your mind and feel the reality follow. You can imagine how you would feel once your spell comes true. You can try all three. Many instant magick spells are simply mind over matter—controlling your body's reactions—but some affect the environment around you. The effects might not always be instantaneous, but they can be. So whatever you “spell” for, make sure you want it because you will probably get it, and keep in mind the Wiccan Rede, “And let it harm none, do what ye will.” Sometimes the word “will” in the Rede is spelled with a capital *W* to emphasize that your actions will bring you back to your True Will, your life's purpose. Magick is a process to support your life's purpose.

You can even use instant magick when not in a deep meditation by programming a hand trigger. A trigger is a hand gesture that will automatically put you into a meditative state. In India, these hand positions are called mudras. In witchcraft, we use them while in a meditative state in order to tell ourselves that when we perform the position during nor-

mal consciousness, we will automatically go into a light meditative state. It's like a self-hypnotic command. Two easy positions are to cross your index and middle finger, or to press your index finger and thumb together (see Figure 13). Either one works.

Exercise: Programming Your Instant Magick Trigger

Count down into your meditative state. Once you are relaxed and focused, physically hold your trigger in both hands. Either cross your index and middle fingers, or put your thumbs and index fingers together. Choose only one trigger position, and do it on both hands. Tell yourself three times, "I program my instant magick trigger. With this trigger, I can use my magick. So mote it be." When you're done, count yourself up and ground. Then, whenever you want to use this form of magick and don't have time to get into a deeper meditative state, use your trigger and a quick affirmation or visualization. You can use either hand—or both for extra power.

Here are some situations where you might use instant magick:

Healing

Think of whatever illness you might have and visualize it going away. In your mind's eye, see yourself healthy. Say to yourself, "I am completely healthy." Imagine how you would feel if you were completely healthy. If you have a cold or allergies, actually visualize your sinuses or lungs clearing up. Imagine broken bones growing back together safely. If you have a flu or virus, imagine the infections dissolving away. Imagine your white blood cells devouring the illness. If that sounds too scientific, imagine microscopic knights in your blood, destroying the illness. When I don't know what is wrong, I imagine myself surrounded in green light—like I'm in a bubble of emerald green—because green is a healing color. Adapt the images to suit your needs. If you want to help heal someone else, it is important to first ask his or her permission to do the healing. Then, in meditation, visualize him or her healthy while using this instant magick.

Stopping Nervousness

Hold your trigger and tell yourself, "I am completely relaxed." Feel yourself become relaxed, no matter what. Consciously tell your muscles to relax. This is a good trick if you get nervous meeting new people or going to new places. I used to do it before I would sing, since I love to sing but still got nervous in front of others. I would also use it when

I had to speak in class or go to new social situations, like a party where I didn't know many people. It really helped.

Keeping Warm

Through meditation, you can control your metabolism and body temperature, either by willing yourself not to react to the cold or by willing your metabolism to rise to adjust to the situation. At the bus stop on cold days, waiting to get to my class on the campus across town, I would visualize myself surrounded in fiery, red light and silently repeat, "I am completely comfortable." After that, the cold didn't bother me too much.

Detoxification

An extension of healing, you can use instant magick to gently draw out any toxins from your system, speeding up your recovery. My friends and students affectionately refer to it as the "anti-hangover spell" because after a night of partying, I would use my trigger and imagine the molecules of alcohol gently coming out of my pores, leaving me clear. The next day, I would be fine, but my friends would be suffering from hangovers.

Cosmic Messenger

If you want to get in contact with someone, you can psychically send them a message. You are not forcing them to contact you if they have decided, for whatever reason, not to contact you. This spell acts like a psychic reminder. Holding your trigger, think about the person you want to contact and think "Call me" or "E-mail me." Your reminder message should be simple. If you keep the intention simple and direct, it is almost always successful.

Summoning Wind

If you are outside, you can use your trigger to ask a cool breeze to come. This is particularly helpful in the warm summer months when out hiking. Just imagine a breeze coming through for a moment, and imagine coolness in your body. Usually a breeze will follow. As you develop a relationship with the four elements (see chapter 6), this ability can grow stronger if you form a bond with the element of air.

Focus and Learning

Hold your instant trigger in class. By putting yourself in a light meditative state, you will absorb information on a deeper level and understand it better. I held my trigger during

lectures and found I retained things for a longer time. Some witches report reading while holding their trigger counteracts many learning disabilities. I was in a constant light alpha state throughout college.

Passing Tests

If I used my trigger to learn something, I would again hold my trigger when being tested on that knowledge. This helps me access the things I've already learned. I can retain and recall under pressure the information I've learned. It won't help if you never studied the information, but it does help if you've put some time into it. This instant magick will also help keep you calm if you usually get nervous during a test.

Fixing Machines

Computers and machines break down, but if you hold your trigger for a moment and visualize the computer working, it will often mysteriously start back up again. I've used my trigger for keeping computers, networks, and musical equipment together when it would otherwise break down.

Strength

Whenever you need strength, both physical and mental, you can use your trigger. Take a moment to reflect on the task at hand and imagine yourself doing it successfully. You don't have to hold the trigger while you perform the action, particularly if it requires the free use of your hands. You can use this for athletic and physical challenges, giving you a boost of energy and personal power, though many physical challenges are really mental challenges. We usually have the strength to succeed already, but have mental doubts about our abilities. Many martial arts and forms of yoga teach us how to unite the strength of our mind with our body to do things we didn't think we were capable of doing. I use this trigger for lifting weights. I worry about hurting myself, so I don't often push myself when I'm capable of lifting more. An alternate hand trigger position is to hold the thumb to the ring finger together, which is known as the solar finger in palmistry. This position increases physical strength, energy, vitality, and personal power.

Parking

One of my favorite uses of instant magick is to quickly visualize a parking space and say, "I ask the Goddess and God for a parking space near the door." Even if I'm not driving it

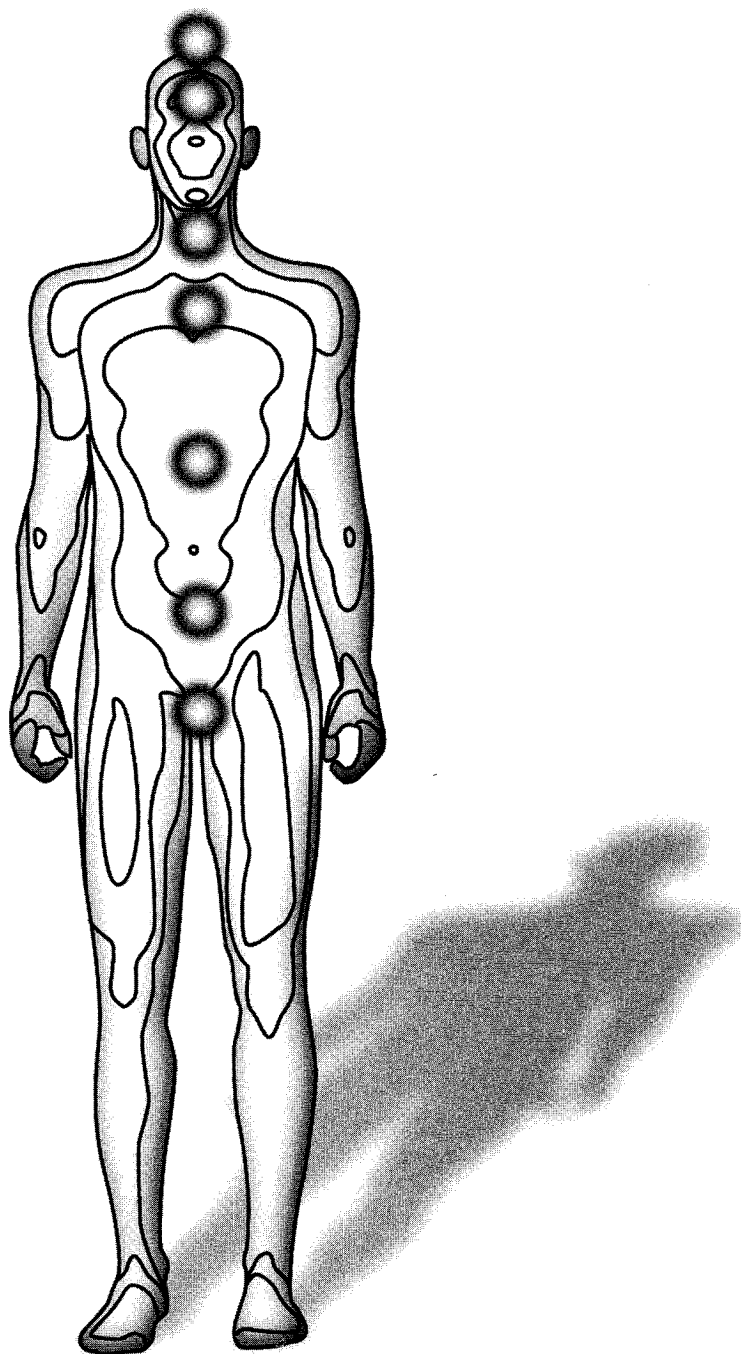


Figure 14: Chakras

works. There will be a spot nearby the entrance you want, even during the holiday shopping season.

The powers of instant magick can be used in many ways. They can be combined with more traditional rituals too. Be creative. You are the next generation of witches.

When I do instant magick, I always remember to thank the Goddess and God for this blessing, even when I've asked and it seems like it didn't come true. You never know why—perhaps it wasn't for your highest good or someone else needed that resource more than you. I just try to be thankful for all I have.

PSYCHIC POWERS AND THE CHAKRAS

Most people don't think they are psychic. That is something special for people on TV or who work in a New Age shop. In reality, we are all psychic. "Psychic" comes from the word "psyche," which means "soul" or "consciousness." A psychic is simply one who listens to the voice of his own soul—his inner knowing. If you meditate, you can hear that voice more easily.

Many witches study the chakras to understand their own personal psychic abilities. "Chakra" is a Sanskrit word, from India, meaning "spinning wheel." People imagine the chakras to look like spinning wheels of colored light anchored in the body. They are like spiritual organs. Like your heart, lungs, and stomach, each has a different job to do in your growth and survival. Knowledge of the seven chakras has become basic information in magick and witchcraft. A general knowledge of them can be very helpful in your meditation and magickal practice.

Most people focus on seven main chakras, based on the seven colors of the rainbow. At the base of the spine is the root chakra; the root is red. Just below the navel is the belly chakra, colored orange. Below the ribs, near your diaphragm, is the solar plexus chakra; its color is yellow. At the chest is the green heart chakra. In the neck is the blue throat chakra. At your forehead is the third eye, usually indigo or purple. At the top of the head is the crown chakra, usually visualized white, like light reflecting off snow.

Each chakra is connected to glands in your body. The glands are the physical representatives of the chakras, and hormones are like the chakras' energy. Teens often have an awakening to magick or psychic ability because of puberty. Their glands are releasing a lot of hormones to prepare for full adulthood. This stimulates the chakras and, for

some, provides an awakening to magick. I've gotten calls from distressed teens or their parents telling me they have started to see auras or hear ghosts during puberty.

The root chakra is connected to the testes in men and ovaries in women. Its gift is the ability to survive in the world and to give and receive pleasure. The urge to procreate—to have sex and to keep your genetics alive—is part of the root chakra. It is also associated with strength and vitality. The root is about our physical health.

The belly chakra is connected to the spleen. Its ability is gut-level intuition. Here we learn to trust ourselves and figure out whom we can trust. When you listen to your gut, you are listening to your belly chakra. Like the intestines, which help us separate food from waste, the belly helps us separate what is good for us from what is harmful.

The solar plexus is the chakra of the adrenal glands. Adrenaline gives us the ability to respond to danger. The response is called “fight or flight,” and it can give us strength, endurance, and speed. The lessons of the solar plexus are about finding personal power and dealing with fear. Our self-image and self-esteem are tied into our sense of personal power. Esteem issues are rooted in this chakra.

The heart is the chakra of love. It is linked to the heart and blood, but its gland is the thymus. The thymus controls our immune system. The heart energy is about love—self-love, family love, relationship love, and spiritual love. When you have an open heart, you are in touch with the energy of love. A loving nature also stimulates the immune and circulatory system.

The throat chakra is the energy of communication. Its gland is the thyroid, which controls our metabolism. The throat controls how we speak and how we listen, both in the world and with our soul and with our spirit guides. The throat is where we voice our will. Through its power we speak our truth and make magick.

The third eye is the center of psychic vision. When you recall a memory, visualize, or daydream, you are using your third eye. This chakra is connected with the pineal gland. The pineal gland is in your brain, but actually it is built a lot like a small eye, just like your regular two eyes. But this eye sees things psychically, not physically. The pineal is involved in sensing the shifts between night and day, and between the seasons. Those greatly affected by seasonal affective disorder often have pineal difficulties.

The crown's gland is the pituitary, the gland that controls all others, and thus the crown chakra is the master of all the other chakras. Its lesson is one of spiritual connection and true purpose. When you are fulfilling your life's purpose and feel connected to

the divine, to other witches, to the Goddess and God, you have a healthy crown chakra. While the root chakra is physical survival, the crown is about spiritual survival.

Here are some simple exercises to work with the chakras. As you practice them, notice how your psychic abilities grow.

Exercise: Simple Chakra Balancing

Count down into your meditative state. Feel your body, and bring your awareness to your legs and feet. Feel as if your feet are growing into big roots, digging deep into the ground. Imagine drinking up the energy of Mother Earth like roots drinking water. Feel the energy move and tingle as it enters your toes. Feel it move into your feet and ankles. Feel it flow up your legs and reach the base of your spine. At the root, it turns red and glows like a ball of flame. Feel it flow up the belly and turn orange, like orange juice. Feel it flow up to the solar plexus and turn yellow, like a lemon.

Feel it flow up to the heart and turn green, like grass. Feel it flow up to the throat and turn blue, like the sky. Feel it flow up to the third eye and turn purple, like a grape. Feel it flow to the top of your head, your crown, and come out as dazzling white light, containing all colors, as if you were looking into an opal in the sunlight.

Feel the white light flow all around your body, healing and balancing you. Say to yourself, "I am completely healthy and balanced." When you're done, count yourself up and ground. When doing this exercise, it's best to balance all seven chakras, one at a time. For now, don't focus on any one chakra. You don't want to overstimulate it. This simple exercise will soon have you healthy and balanced.

Exercise: Listening to Your Gut Instinct

If you have a problem in your life—a decision to make that is confusing you, perhaps—think about it and write it down as a question. Think about the possible answers to your question. Then count down into your meditative state. Do the chakra-balancing meditation above to get clear and centered. Then bring both hands down to your belly. Feel your belly chakra. Ask yourself your question. Feel your belly. Then think of each po-

I'm Not Feeling Anything!?!

Some books and teachers make you think you have to have really intense sensations or see bright vivid colors when balancing the chakras. That does happen to some, but it's not mandatory. Everybody experiences energy, psychic abilities, and magick in different ways, and often the experience is quite subtle. Although some people see and experience things vividly, most start out with a vague sense of something subtle. Go with your first impression and trust your intuition. The experience is key, and often the experience is not what we expect or want.

tential answer. How does each answer feel in your belly, in your gut? What feels like the healthiest answer to you? Learn to listen to your body's wisdom and intuition. It will tell you when you are not on the right path. When you're done, count yourself up and ground.

Exercise: Learning to Listen

Psychic listening is called clairsaudience, meaning you hear things clearly or truly. Sometimes the skill of clairsaudience lets you hear the voices of spirits (more on this below), but usually it helps you hear the voice of your own soul.

This exercise is a lot like the Listening to Your Gut Instinct exercise above. Think of a problem you have, but do not necessarily try to figure out the solution. Perhaps the answer is something you haven't consciously thought of yet. Count down to your meditative state, and do your chakra-balancing meditation. Then bring your attention to your throat. Feel yourself surrounded by clear blue light. Say to yourself, "I ask to connect with my soul wisdom, my higher self." Then think of your problem. Ask yourself, "What is the answer?" Then listen. What is the first thing that pops into your mind? What are the first words you "hear"? They won't necessarily be out loud. Answers will speak with your inner voice, like when you have a conversation with yourself in your own mind. The voice of your inner wisdom will be soft but strong, secure in its wisdom. The more you listen to it, the more it will grow. The answer may be immediate, or it may take a bit. Sometimes we are not answered directly through clairsaudience, but we will get a "sign." You might soon talk to someone who answers your questions. Think of these people as your inner wisdom's helpers, messengers from the Goddess and God.

When you're done, say to yourself, "I thank my higher wisdom." Count yourself back up and ground.

Exercise: Inner Scrying

Psychic seeing is called clairvoyance, or true seeing. You are seeing with your inner eye—your third eye—and not your two eyeballs. Witches often have visions that answer questions and help them see into the future. They use visual focuses and reflective surfaces, such as mirrors painted black, crystal balls, fire, and pools of water to gaze psychically and receive symbolic answers. This gazing is called scrying and many traditions and people use it. The first form of scrying I learned was in meditation, and it is still my favorite.

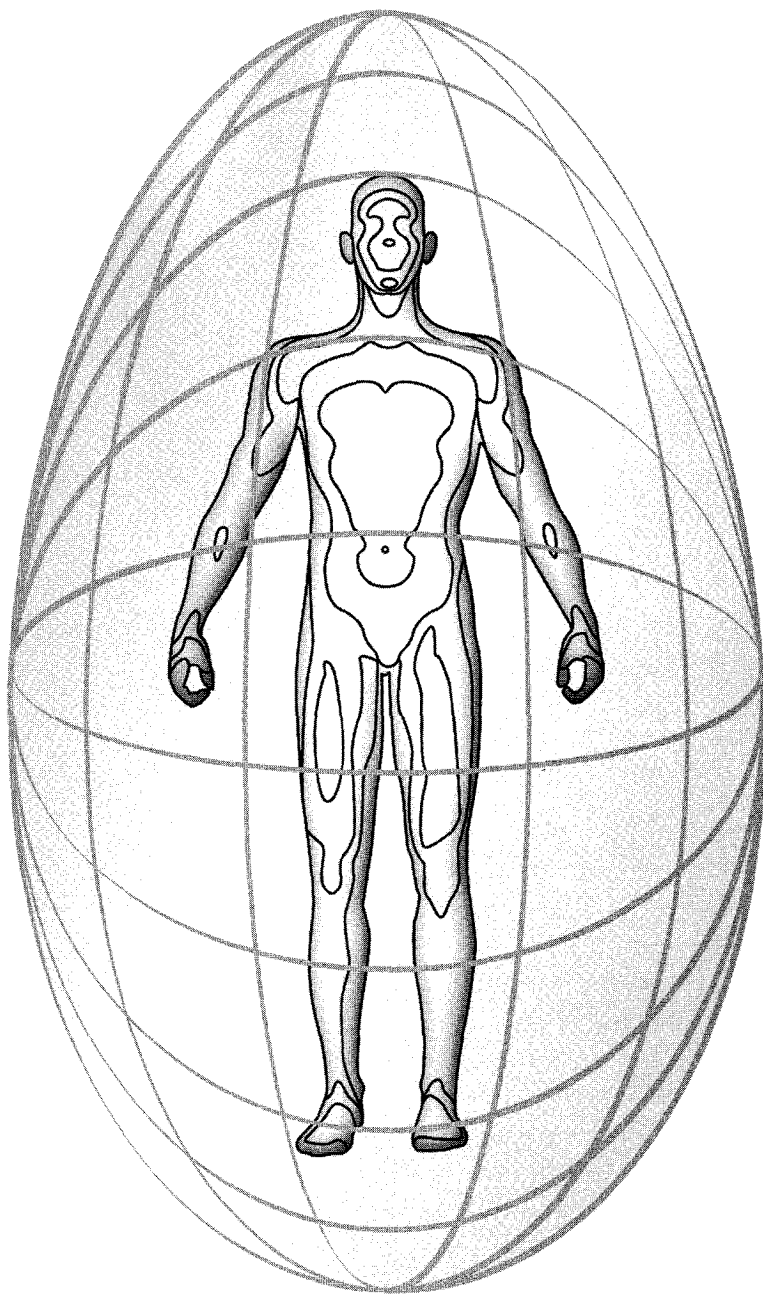


Figure 15: Protection Shield

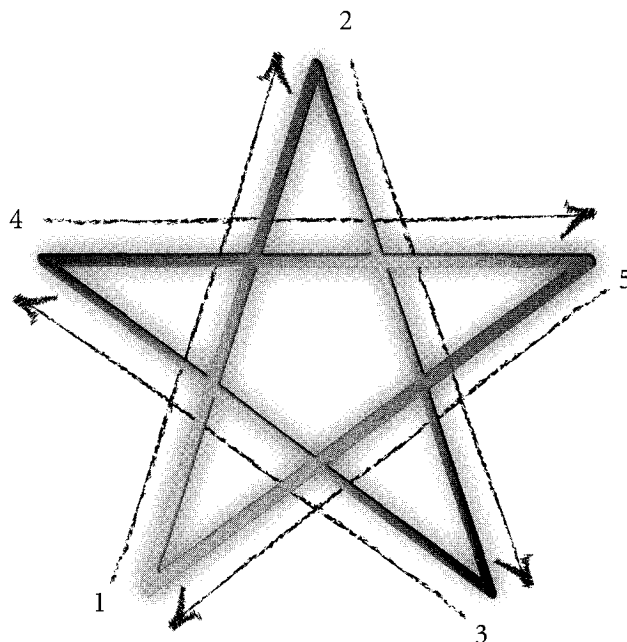


Figure 16: Protection Pentagram

Count down to your meditative state. Imagine in your hands a large gemstone or crystal. Make sure it has a large face—a flat side you can look into. It can be a quartz crystal, a diamond, ruby, or emerald, or even a long and flat stone, like a crystal mirror. Once you create it in your mind's eye, call upon your higher wisdom, "I ask to connect with my soul wisdom, my higher self." You do this to make sure you get a true answer and not merely what you want to see. Then ask yourself any questions you have. I usually just ask, "What do I need to see?" Then gaze into the crystal and let images form that will answer your questions. You may see literal things, or you may see symbols that are like those in dreams and need to be figured out in order to be understood. If you see something you can't understand, it is always good to ask a friend or elder for their input and opinions.

When done, say to yourself, "I thank my higher wisdom." Count yourself back up and ground.

THE AURA AND PROTECTION

Not only do we have chakras, but we also have energy fields in and around our bodies that most people call the aura. The aura consists of many layers of fields. Some think an aura is an extension of the chakras or an effect of their energy. Visual psychics see it as an egg or sphere around the body. They can view different colors in it and use their impressions of the colors to figure out your health and mood.

Witches and mystics can control their auras. It takes practice, but with meditation skills, we can use the aura to heal, protect, and change our moods. By visualizing colors in the aura, we change our awareness. Each color has a different feeling to it. Each is personal, but there are some general guidelines that apply to most people.

Red—energy

Orange—clear and sharp mind

Yellow—enthusiasm, happiness

Green—love, joy

Blue—peace, tranquility

Purple—meditation, spirituality

White—spiritual awareness, protection

Once you have an awareness of the aura, you can add in new colors—like a painter—that will change your mood. You can also “program” the energy of your aura, like you program a computer, for protection and well-being. The following exercise helps you do it.

Exercise: Protection Shield

Count down into your meditative state. Do the chakra-balancing meditation from above. Feel the shower of light from your crown fill your aura. Imagine the aura as a sphere of light and energy all around you. Let the image form. It may be perfectly circular or more like an egg shape. Whatever shape it is, it will be perfect for you, extending just beyond your arm’s length. Feel it fill with the light you have drawn up from the earth and passed through the chakras.

With your intention, change the light to whatever color you want. Choose a color that has qualities you want to have. Imagine yourself in the colored light. Feel those qualities in yourself.

Then imagine reaching out to the edge of the aura, and imagine it turning into clear crystal, becoming a shield (see figure 15). Tell yourself silently with your inner voice, “I charge this shield to protect me from all harm.” Repeat the statement three times. Imagine drawing a five-pointed star, a pentagram, in each of the directions around you, in front, to the right, behind you, and to the left. To draw a protection pentagram, also known as a banishing pentagram, start in the lower-left corner and go to the top point, then complete the star (see figure 16). Drawing it in this way actuates the pentagram’s power of protection.

You have now created a protection shield that will primarily protect you from psychic and magickal harm but can also warn you to get out of the path of physical harm. You will need to repeat this spell frequently to keep its protection active.

When done, count yourself back up and ground.

SPEAKING WITH SPIRITS

Witches are walkers between worlds. We have one foot in the physical and one foot in the spiritual. From our perspective, there are many forms of life that do not have physical bodies. Witches believe in ghosts but don’t look to them for wisdom. Ghosts are spirits trapped on this side of the veil, and they usually need healing and release.

The dividing line between this world and the spirit world is often called the veil, and at different times of the year, it is easier to communicate across the veil. Spirits on the other side have a different perspective and can show us things we may not see clearly with a human perspective. Many witches believe in the spirits of animals, plants, nature, faery folk, angels, deities, and ancestors—our family members who have passed on.

Some spirits who have gained wisdom continue to help us from the other side, acting as allies or guides. When we meditate, we ask to connect with them, and our spirit guides will answer questions or take us on a visionary journey to teach us or heal us. They’re our friends and mentors. Like witches, they give back to the community, but they view community as those on both sides of the veil.

Learning to meditate helps you connect with your spirit guides. They’re always present and will speak to you in ways you can understand. They speak through our chakras, through our gut instincts and intuitions, helping nudge us in the right direction. As we become more psychically aware, they can appear in a vision in our mind’s eye, or we can hear their voices. Some witches even sense the physical presence of their guides. Like meditation, communicating with your spirit guide gets easier the more you practice. Some

people get easily frustrated by not being able to see or hear their spirit guides. I know I did. But it comes with time and patience.

We live in a culture that doesn't really support the belief in spirit guides. It's easy to feel like you are crazy because to most people it looks like you are talking to someone who isn't there. And it is possible to go overboard with spirit communication. Some people withdraw too much from physical reality because they are fascinated with the spirit world, and they use spirit communication as an escape. Witches seek balance. We are firmly grounded in both worlds and do not shirk our responsibilities in either realm. Don't look to meditation and spirit guides for escapes from daily life. They are aids to living your life in this world.

Those who are having a healthy psychic or spiritual experience have boundaries in place because of their meditation practice and rituals. They can control the experience and stop when they desire to. Those who are having an unhealthy psychic experience cannot control it. They have little knowledge in setting boundaries with the spirit world. Such people often have very sacred magickal gifts, but the first thing they should focus on is grounding, balancing, and finding healthy ways to maintain themselves. There are many ways to keep imbalances in check and be a functioning member of society. Only then should they seek out magickal training.

Meditation may at times reveal things about yourself that you don't like, but you must remember that you control your meditation. Just because you don't like the answer doesn't mean it was an unhealthy experience. Your experience will still stop when you count up and ground yourself. If you are in a meditation and feel afraid of what you are experiencing, do your protection shield, then count up and ground yourself. This will banish the spirit and break all contact. Then examine why you felt fear: usually it's not because of a harmful spirit, but because of our own inner fear. If you find you cannot end the experience easily, try the cleansing and protection rituals in chapters 6 and 7 to end the experience. If they don't help in the long term, you should seek help from more experienced practitioners. Most witches don't need such protection when attempting to talk to guides, but it's helpful to know where the information is, just in case.

Exercise: Spirit Guide Meditation

Before you try this meditation, make sure you have already done the protection shield exercise. You can repeat it right before this one to make a longer meditation if you desire, but you don't have to. Just make sure you have done it recently and feel protected.

Count down into your meditative state. With your magickal inner voice, say, "In the name of the Goddess and God, I ask to meet my spirit guides." Repeat it three times. Then imagine there is a door or a gate in front of you. Step through the door and find yourself in an ancient temple, a place of power. Waiting in the temple are spirit guides. They may be humanoid, animal, angel, or anything else. Ask them to show you they are your spirits by sending you love and light. If their energy passes through your protection shield, they are spirits for you. If it doesn't, then perhaps they are spirits you don't want to work with at this time, and you can end the meditation.

If you continue the meditation, talk with your spirits. Ask them their names and jobs. Listen with an open heart and see what happens. Ask them any questions you have, or talk to them about any of your problems. Ask for advice. When done, thank them. Return through the gate, and count yourself up and ground.

Once you make contact with your spirit guides, the secret is to build a relationship with them. You must visit with them. Talk with them. Journey with them. Learn their wisdom, and see how it applies to you and your life. Just because they are spirits doesn't mean they are always right, but they do have a different point of view for you to understand. My best magick and meditations come from the advice of my spirit guides.

Some witches don't meet any spirit guides at first. You may not either. That's okay. You still have spirit guides. Watch your dreams and keep a journal by your nightstand to write your first thoughts when you awaken. Your guides may become clear in your dreams. Sometimes guides work with us intuitively. Witchcraft has many skills, and not everybody can be good at every skill. Some are great at healing. Others make wonderful potions, and some are really great at working with spirit guides, both their own and other people's. Some of us just know our spirits are there, but don't have a lot of contact. That's okay, too, as long as you don't forget they are there, and you call upon them when you need them. They will help you intuitively and in your dreams; you just might not consciously realize it.

God and Goddess Oils

The use of ritual tools and herbs in meditation can be very helpful. You can wear oils and potions that help you awaken to your guides and psychic abilities.

If I want to meditate and connect with the Goddess and God—in a universal sense or with a specific deity—I will use an oil that resonates with them. I will rub a few drops on my wrists, on the nape of the neck, or on my third eye.

Test out a small amount to make sure you don't have an allergic reaction to the oils. If it looks safe, use the oil in moderation. If it smells too strongly, dilute it further with a base oil like olive, grape seed, almond, apricot kernel, or jojoba. Essential oils are available in witch shops and many holistic health food stores.

Once I apply it, I get into a meditative state, and I ask to connect with the Goddess or God like I would a spirit guide. Although witchcraft traditions believe you should not speak to the gods directly and instead should go through intermediaries like spirit guides, angels, and ancestors, I encourage people to build direct relationships with the Goddess and God. Other guides can help, too, but there is no reason why you can't speak directly to the Goddess and God. We are all connected. We all act as priests in the Craft.

Try making these oils if you have the resources, and charge them in a magick circle (see chapter 6).

God Oil

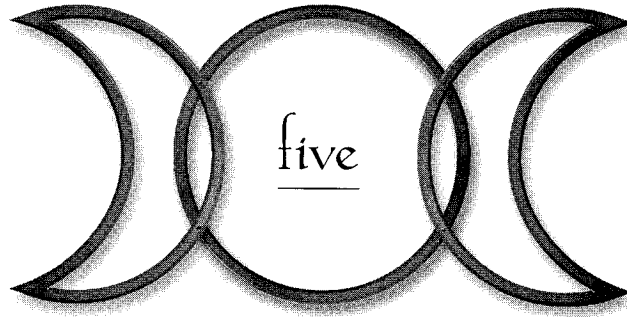
½ cup of a base oil, such as olive, grape seed, almond, apricot kernel, or jojoba
 3 drops of cedar essential oil
 2 drops of frankincense essential oil
 2 drops of pine essential oil

Put one small quartz crystal or white stone and a twig of oak in the mixture.

Goddess Oil

½ cup of a base oil
 3 drops of sandalwood essential oil
 3 drops of lemon essential oil
 2 drops of orris root essential oil
 1 drop of myrrh essential oil

Put one small quartz crystal or white stone and a twig of birch in the mixture.



Living in the World: Roles and Responsibility

Part of becoming a man is taking responsibility for yourself and for your place in the cycle of life. While lots of books talk about how to do spells and rituals, not a lot of books talk about what it means to be a witch. Before you go off dedicating yourself with rituals and performing magick, you should have a good idea about what it means to be a witch.

So what does it take to be a witch? You will probably get many different answers, one for every witch you ask. But most witches and pagans share some similar themes. Witchcraft isn't a hobby; it's a way of life.

DO NO HARM

The ethics of witchcraft are a strong guide to this way of life. The Wiccan Rede, "An' it harm none, do what ye will," is a powerful statement. Witches take responsibility for

their own actions. They don't blame others. Well, usually they don't. That's the ideal we aspire to, but witches are people too. We all have our flaws and shortcomings. Just because you become a witch, you don't become perfect, but hopefully you take responsibility for what you do.

Even though you see it in movies and books, most modern witches usually don't do curses. We don't take revenge. A lot of people are attracted to witchcraft because of the power. They feel being a witch will make them powerful, and they will be able to do whatever they want, and no one will hurt them. It doesn't work that way. Most witches believe in the Law of Three: whatever you do returns to you threefold. We don't seek revenge, no matter how justified we may feel, because that act will return to us. The universe doles out balance in its own way. We don't need to pretend to be agents of justice or karma. My mother used to tell me not to hate anyone, no matter how mad you might be. Being mad will pass as your anger fades, but retaining hate only ends up hurting you.

We don't have a set of commandments. No book tells us what to do or not do, so we have to be very responsible. We must think for ourselves and decide for ourselves what is right and not right in our life and community. People often think witches are irresponsible because we have no rigid set of rules like the Ten Commandments. Some traditions of Wicca do, but for the most part, we do not. Most witches follow their own personal code of ethics, based on their own beliefs and intuitions, usually in harmony with the Wiccan Rede. Some traditions of witchcraft don't follow the Wiccan Rede, but even these witches have their own code of ethics and morals.

CODE OF HONOR

Most witches who walk the path have a sense of personal honor. They try to embody the ideas of life they hold sacred. We look to the values of the pagan people in our past, to the qualities they held high, and to spiritual traditions from across the world.

Honesty

Because so much of magick and spellwork depends on your words, witches and mages take their words seriously. We seek to be honest, and when we commit to something with a promise, we do all we can to fulfill it. If we rob our words of their truth, of their power, then our magick will be less reliable and less powerful. If what you say is always

the truth, then what you speak in ritual will happen, because you speak the truth. It's a great power and a great responsibility.

Health

Life was tough in the ancient world, and only those who maintained their health and vitality would survive. We see the physical world as sacred, including our bodies. We must take care of our bodies through exercise, nutrition, and holistic health. We enjoy the pleasures of the physical world, but know the secrets of moderation and balance.

Courage

Ancient pagans often came from a warrior culture, and even those who were not warriors learned to protect themselves. Mystics in many cultures are thought of as spiritual warriors—those who practice karate and kung fu, for instance. Warriors master their minds and spirits to find courage and overcome fear. Courage is a key aspect of honor. Though most of us don't have to defend our village from wandering barbarians, we do encounter times in our lives that force us to face our fears and act with courage.

Compassion

Compassion and generosity are big parts of witchcraft. The art of witchcraft grew out of healing, and all good healers have compassion for those in need. Hospitality is a key aspect of compassion. Old myths often talk about the gods taking the form of beggars, and those people who welcomed the beggars were honored and rewarded for their generosity, and those who shunned the beggars were scorned.

Compassion has to start with yourself. If you don't love yourself, you can't really love anyone else—or let them love you. I had a hard time with this. I started in witchcraft mad at the world, and that's not the attitude you should bring to any spiritual pursuit. So my teachers and spirit guides forced me to find some self-love and self-esteem. I found it through meditation, journaling, and even exploring some nontraditional forms of therapy, such as flower essence therapy and shamanism. I found that self-esteem is the key to magick. It's not only the key to doing true magick, but it is the key to *being* magick by living a magickal life.

Knowledge

Knowledge is valued by all witches. Witches always seek to learn more about life, magick, myth, and healing. My teachers encouraged me to learn all I could about witchcraft but also to learn about world religions and other cultures. All the witches of ages past were scholars in their own ways. Some learned from books, and some learned by watching nature and speaking with others. Those in the Celtic culture valued all knowledge. Their gods were masters of not only magick and nature, but the arts and crafts as well. Witches seek knowledge because it can be the foundation for wisdom.

Respect

Lastly, witches are open-minded toward and respectful of others. We have been persecuted, burned, hanged, and drowned in the past because people didn't respect the old ways. So we aren't quick to pass judgment on others. We hold others to the Wiccan Rede, too, even if it's not their own. As long as other people's beliefs and actions do no harm, then they should be free to do whatever they want. Not only do we respect other people and their beliefs, but we also have a respect for the Earth and all that is on it. Some witches are vegetarian, and others are avid meat-eaters, but most witches have a reverence for the planet and express it in the form of stewardship of the environment. We honor what we eat and where we live. In the end, witchcraft is about community service. We are healers of ourselves, our people, and now the world.

Exercise: What's Your Personal Code of Honor?

Take time to write in your Book of Shadows about your personal code of honor. Do you value the qualities found here? Do you value different qualities or have different ways of expressing what you value? Are these values different from the ones you were taught in your family or community? If so, how? Take the time in your book to really explore what you think. What shapes your words and actions?

MAKING THE SWITCH

Wicca is a religion, and it's a serious step to change your spiritual and religious path. Becoming a witch isn't something you do lightly. There are many steps involved. You don't suddenly wake up and make the decision—though once you've learned about witch-

craft, you may feel you have been involved in it all your life and just never known what to call it. So many souls on the Earth today are witches. They are just awakening to that fact. I and many others think that at this critical time, the Earth is calling for her stewards, calling our souls back to the world in greater numbers than ever before.

Many people feel conflicted about becoming involved with Wicca after having a more traditional family religion. I was raised Catholic and went through twelve years of Catholic school. By the time I found Wicca, I was done with Catholicism because it didn't serve my spiritual needs. I was legally an adult, and it didn't really cause that much of a conflict with my family. They let me make my own decisions.

If you are living with your family and being raised in a conservative setting, you might feel some conflicts. There are a few situations you could be in and different ways to handle them all.

Avenues for Exploring

First, you might be attracted to Wicca but not feel a strong need to leave your family's religion. You could have very good experiences with that religion but feel the ideas and practices of witchcraft call to you. Some witches mingle traditional religions with Wicca. A few have even created things like Christian Wicca. Traditional Wiccans are often horrified by it, but for some, it fills their needs. It can be easier to explain to family that you are adding to your beliefs, rather than discarding family traditions.

Being Undecided

You could share that you are studying the Craft, but you don't have to make any decisions about becoming a witch. I actually suggest you remain open and still learn about your family's religion so you can make an educated decision about your path as you grow into manhood. If your family doesn't have a strong religious background, or even if it does, I think it's a good idea to explore several different religions. As a part of my exploration in Wicca, one of my first teachers suggested I read up on several different religions as well as Wicca and paganism, to understand what else is out there and see what is best suited for me.

Being Public

On the other hand, you may feel your family's religion is not for you and want to pursue only Wicca openly. It can be difficult to practice witchcraft in a family setting, though.

Etiquette

You might wonder when it's appropriate to talk openly about your or another's spiritual path. If, for example, you are at a pagan or Wiccan event and meet someone there, and then you see that same person out in public somewhere else, it is considered polite to avoid mentioning witchcraft if other people are around. The exception is if the person is obviously open about their beliefs. If they have a big pentacle on, then it's probably okay to talk witchcraft in mixed company. If there are no outward signs, or they are very subtle, then don't. I think it's important to respect other people's wishes on the matter. Their choices don't stop me from doing what I feel is right. If you aren't sure, try to find a private moment and ask.

Hopefully, your family will be supportive. Hope for the best, but be prepared if they are not. Find other allies in your life to support your new spiritual quest. You might have a family member who is open to new ideas, or open to simply supporting your exploration. You can also find support among friends and online. When I began my path in Wicca, initially I didn't have a lot of support. My family and most of my friends were Catholic, but I had a family friend who introduced me to witchcraft. She acted as a mentor in many ways, and encouraging me on my spiritual path was a part of her support.

Being Private

You could also keep your new faith private and stay "in the broom closet," as witches like to say. But I don't recommend keeping secrets in families. I kept other secrets for many years, and it was much better when I shared my true feelings with my family even though I thought they wouldn't understand or approve. I know it can be hard, but don't be afraid to share your thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and interests with your family and friends.

Once you do decide to study the Craft, it can be difficult. If you can't find a teacher, you might have to learn it alone (becoming what is known as a *solitary* witch) from books and other sources. If your family is not pagan, you probably won't learn it from them. The best thing to do is to take it slowly and learn everything to the best of your ability, so when you are ready to make any choices, you will have all the information you need.

THE BROOM CLOSET

If you decide to follow the path of the witch, you will have to eventually decide how open you are about it. If you are publicly a witch, we call it being "out of the broom closet." Some witches choose not to be open because of where they live or their family

situations. They're concerned about persecution and outright physical harm from those who think witches are evil. Even though there are laws against discrimination and hate crimes, nothing guarantees everyone will follow them. It wasn't so long ago that African Americans and gays were being terrorized, and some still are. So, for some witches, being in the broom closet is a sensible move.

Other witches feel it is necessary to be out, open, and proud in order to help change the stereotypes of the witch in the mainstream culture. I agree, but I also respect a witch's choice to remain private. For those who wish to be public, there are a host of open circles, support groups, and even Pagan Pride Days events held around the world. Pagan Pride Days are regional celebrations organized locally. Each region doesn't celebrate on the same exact day, but community leaders set aside a day to hold a public event, for pagans to celebrate, and the general public to "check out" the pagan community and understand it better. Pagan Pride events are a great place to network with friendly community members and make contacts. They are similar to Gay Pride events found in most metropolitan areas.

Being a public witch is your choice, and you should think long and hard before making a decision. Once you come out, it's hard to go back in. You should also make sure you know about witchcraft and have practiced it a bit before you decide to make a commitment to the path. Just reading a book doesn't make you a witch. If you are learning about the Craft, you don't have to worry about "coming out" until you make a decision about it. Nothing forces you to stay in the Craft if you should later decide it's not for you. Witches want what is best for you, and so do the gods. If being a witch is not best for you, then you should follow another path.

If you decide you do want to be out of the broom closet and feel you are ready, then think about who you want to tell and who you want to tell first. Think about who would be open and supportive in your path and start with them. Think about your friends, parents, and other relatives. Don't expect everyone to be supportive or to understand. Depending on how public you are about your practice, be prepared for family, friends, classmates, teachers, and all the people in your life to look at you a little bit differently. You will probably have to explain what you mean and what you believe. Communication is the key. A lot of people confuse Wicca with harmful practices or Hollywood movie magic. It will be up to you to explain real witchcraft or point them in the direc-

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is tough on both sides. We want to be like the people who are around us. We want to fit in with the crowd—at least we usually do—but most witches are unique and unusual people, with personal paths that will take them in a different direction than most of their peers. You might be afraid to tell your nonpagan friends about your beliefs because you're afraid to be different from them. But if you can't tell your closest friends who you really are, how close are they? If you are completely open about your path, there is also the potential of ridicule. Though many now think it's hip to be a witch, that might not be the attitude of those around you. You have to take these factors into consideration.

On the other hand, you might experience peer pressure from pagan friends who feel you should be public, even if you have decided that it is best to keep your practice private. There may be demands on you to join a coven or group or follow a specific tradition or teacher. Pagans and witches who make such demands are not following the heart of the Craft—do what you will and let it harm none. Witches who really understand the spirit of the Craft will still love and support you as you make your own decisions and think for yourself. They might offer suggestions and hints when asked, but they won't demand you do things their way.

tion of good, reliable information. If a person is open to hearing about your point of view on Wicca, a good place to start is with the Wiccan Rede and Law of Three. I tend to “slip” in aspects of my spirituality into daily conversation, simply because it's a part of my life, so if someone asks me what I am doing this weekend, and I'm doing a ritual celebration, I tell them. It creates an opportunity for conversation, but you have to wait and see if they open the door. If they inquire more, then you can talk a bit deeper. If they don't, then respect the wishes of others. For me, witchcraft is a daily part of my life, so if people are involved in my life, they probably hear something about it, even if it's not for them. I hear about a lot of things that are not up my alley, such as sports, when conversing with friends and acquaintances. Mystical or occult religions are out of the ordinary, and do push some people's buttons more than sports and even politics. Some people get very uncomfortable talking about religion. Many people don't have any interest in Wicca, your spiritual path, or even religion in general. As a general rule, pagans don't seek to convert others, but it is easy to get caught up in the excitement of something that works well for you and wanting to share it with others. Although it is great to share your experiences and knowledge, only do so when it's welcomed.

It's also easy to be quickly thrust in to the position of teacher soon after coming out of the broom closet. If you know a bit about the practice, suddenly you may find yourself surrounded by people interested and looking to you to teach them. It takes years of serious training and personal practice to become a qualified teacher. You can still share what you know, but also share books and other resources, so the seekers around you can find their own information and

not just rely on your experience. If you are just dabbling in magick, make that clear. Don't feel you have to know everything. If you don't know, simply tell them that. Even the most experienced teacher knows when to say "I don't know" and hopefully point the questioner in a good direction to continue the search. It's easy to get into an unhealthy "guru" routine. It's flattering when people come to you for advice and information. It's also great to help where you can. But it is ethical to know when you are over your head and to never fake it.

I found myself in this position of teacher while in college. People around me noticed huge improvements in my self-esteem and confidence and wanted to know what I was doing differently. When I "came out," explaining I was involved in witchcraft, some wanted more information and the direct experiences. I ended up leading a full Moon meditation group. When this group wanted a more serious witchcraft experience, like a coven, and asked me to form it, I declined. I was still learning in my first coven. I wasn't a leader in that coven, but I was growing by being among other experienced witches. To start my own coven, where I was the teacher and leader, would have been a nice ego boost, but entirely unrealistic. I wasn't ready. Thankfully I was honest with myself and didn't make that move. It was only after several years, intense education, and deep healing work that the Moon meditation group turned into my first class of students.

On the other end of the spectrum, once you are out, you have to beware of others who are overeager to share their religion with you because they feel you are damned for being a practicing witch. Many people have wanted to debate the ethics and morals of witchcraft in a biblical context with me. Other will tell me they are praying for my soul. I am polite. I smile nicely and say, "Thanks but no thanks," and go on my way. I've found the more you engage with people who hold these biblical views, the more time and effort they will take from your life. I tend to avoid these type of people when possible. That's not to say you can't talk about Wicca with those in more mainstream religions. I've had wonderful conversations with Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish friends, where we simply shared without judging the other, or agreed to disagree on particular points,

What's the Code?

There are ways of casually letting someone know that you practice and still be private. If someone greets you with "Merry meet" or leaves with "Merry part," he might be pagan. If he uses the phrase "Blessed be" or says "gods" or "Goddess" when other people would say "God," such as "gods bless you" when you sneeze, then he might be pagan. Look and listen for subtle clues.

but no one felt attacked. Each situation will be different, so you have to use your better judgment as to which conversations you want to invest your time and effort in.

Exercise: Out of the Broom Closet

Think about how people would react if you were out of the broom closet. What would your life be like? Whom would you tell first and why? Do you think it would go well? As you think about coming out of the broom closet, think about how you might overreact or underreact to some things. People can defy your expectations, but it is good to think about these decisions before rushing into them. If you are already out of the broom closet, reflect on the experience. Did it go well? Is there anything you would have changed or done differently?

RESPONSIBILITY

One of the reasons why people are afraid of witches is because of their power. All the old stories, good and bad, talk about the power witches hold over nature, the universe, and other people. Although a lot of it is true, a lot of it is also false. Though it might exist on an unconscious level, this fear is at the heart of many misunderstandings about witchcraft.

Many people, teens included, first come to witchcraft because of this sense of power. People who resonate with this primal path are typically misunderstood by the people around them, and they might have suffered because of this misunderstanding. But there's a fine line between empowerment, which is healthy, and power lust, which is unhealthy. You should come to the Craft with a desire for empowerment, to understand and master yourself and your relationship with the universe. If you seek power to control or harm others, even if you feel it is justified, then you should probably think about things more before you start doing spells.

Power isn't about controlling others (be they people or spirits), it's about control of yourself and building a relationship with nature, spirits, and the gods. Through these relationships, you create magick. Magick is empowerment through partnership and cooperation.

Since witches believe that their power interacts with the environment around them, bending and shaping reality, we need to be even more responsible than the average person. We are not only responsible for our actions but also our thoughts and words, because

these are what power our spells. We cannot be careless in our thoughts and words, because even when we aren't doing spells, our thoughts and words are shaping our reality.

I know I find myself thinking and saying things I don't really mean. We have all sorts of phrases in our culture that can be harmful, but we don't mean them literally. Still, our words are powerful. When I was in my teens, when someone bothered me, I would tell them to "drop dead." I didn't literally want that person dead; I just wanted to get rid of him at the moment. I'm sure I could have used a more colorful phrase with a different literal meaning, and still get my point across, but I didn't. I said, "Drop dead." Then my witchcraft teachers asked me how would I feel if someone died after I said that. My power might have contributed to that person's death, and I would have had some responsibility for it. Well, I didn't want that outcome, so I had to unlearn that phrase.

Other times, I had an overactive imagination from watching too many horror movies and reading too many scary novels. My mind would play tricks on me, and I would imagine the worst. If someone was late to meet with me, I would wonder if she got into a gruesome accident on her way to meet me. For a split second, I would imagine it in my mind. I was sending that thought out into the universe. I wondered if I was having a psychic vision of something that happened, or if my fears and imagination were creating an unhealthy thought that could change reality. In the end, it didn't matter if it was a precognitive psychic vision or a manifestation of my own fears. I learned a technique from my witchcraft teacher, Laurie Cabot, called neutralization that was incredibly effective. Regular practice of neutralization not only helps you take responsibility for your current thoughts, but also helps you work through long-held patterns of belief that limit you and hold you back. By practicing neutralization faithfully, I started to understand my own thought patterns and how those patterns affected me over a long period of time. Once I was aware of them, I could begin to heal by using neutralization to deprogram what I didn't like, and use meditation and affirmations to create healthy thought patterns.

Exercise: Neutralization

Whenever you inadvertently think or say something you don't want to create, simply think or say, "I neutralize that," with the intention of stopping and grounding that energy before it manifests. If, for example, you envision something harmful in your mind's eye, imagine crossing it out with a white X or stamping it with a "CANCEL" stamp. That

will neutralize the image and prevent it from occurring in reality. This is one of the most powerful spells to do regularly to heal your own mind.

After I learned the neutralization technique, I found myself saying “I neutralize that” all the time. I got sick of it, but I kept with it. Every time I said something I did not want to create, I took responsibility for it and neutralized it. Soon, I neutralized and dissolved away those unhealthy and unwanted thoughts and fears. I no longer thought them. The sooner you start this habit, the sooner you will clear your mind and think in a balanced way.

The next meditation ritual can be done regularly to help balance your mind. It doesn’t require you to do something “unbalanced” first and then neutralize it. It is for general mental balance, used whenever you feel stressed or obsessive.

Exercise: The Scales of Balance

Tools

You’ll need two stones of roughly the same size. They can be regular rocks or polished crystals, whatever you prefer.

One of our strongest symbols of balance is the scale. In certain cultures, the scale is the symbol of balance and of justice. In astrology, it is the sign of Libra, an air sign symbolizing our relationships, the mind, and the search for balance in life. So in this ritual, we will become like the scales. Start by cleansing your stones. You can leave them in the sunlight for a few hours or hold them under running water. Many traditions say to use a stream, but I have found running water from a faucet will do in a pinch. Ask the gods to remove any unwanted harmful energies. Now your stones are cleansed.

Sit down, get comfortable, and close your eyes. Hold one stone in each hand. Count down into your meditative state. Hold your arms out straight to either side, like you are the scales. Think about anything that stresses you or bothers you in life, any thoughts and feelings that are unbalanced. Feel them move like currents of energy from your head and neck, through your shoulders, to each arm, and to each stone. Traditionally, things of a private or feminine nature will go to the left, since the left is the feminine and emotional side, and things more public and masculine will go to the right, since the right is the projective, masculine side. It might be the opposite if you are left-handed.

Don't worry about what side does what, though, just follow your feelings and experiences.

When done, the stones will seem heavier, and your arms will be tired, but your mind will be clearer and more balanced. Cleanse the stones again to be free of the unwanted energy completely.

SEXUALITY

Sexuality plays a huge role in the practice of witchcraft, but like many things in the Craft, a lot of people misunderstand its role or try to use it to suit their own desires or prejudices. Sex has a lot of power, and accordingly, people can fear sexual energy. When you are entering manhood, a lot of sexual energy is activated through puberty, and it can be difficult to understand how sexuality can play a part in your spiritual life, since many mainstream religions repress sexuality. I know I thought sex was sinful and dirty. Few people talked about it openly and seriously. Much of what I knew was learned in the boys' locker room or on the school bus.

In the Craft, however, sexuality is sacred. We feel no embarrassment talking about it. Sex is a part of life. Without it, there would be no life.

Wicca is based on the concept of union between the Goddess and God. Through their loving union, they created the universe. As the gods have this union, so then do people, who are images of the gods, after all. Physical love is an expression of divine love. Our bodies are our temples.

Through the ritual known as the Great Rite, the union of the Goddess and God is magickally enacted with a blade and chalice. Some practitioners actually have sex as part of the ritual. Many witches and magicians learn specific practices of sex magick, sometimes called tantra, for both creating change in the world and creating spiritual enlightenment. To

Sex and Teachers

Although Wicca has sexual elements in ritual, the vast majority of sex in rituals is symbolic and no actual sex is ever mandatory. You should never do anything you are not comfortable doing. There are people who try to twist the Craft for their own purposes. Don't let any such person intimidate you into doing things that are not for you. Some predatory teachers of the Craft use the sexual elements to take advantage of their young students. You don't have to have sex with someone just because they are teaching you. Some will threaten to withhold important information, or they will flatter you by saying that you are adult enough to know these inner secrets (but, of course, they'll say you can't tell anyone how you learned them). Such predators will encourage you to follow only their teachings and will say others who write or teach don't know the true mysteries. Bottom line: they're lying and using manipulation to get their way with you. Witches, like most responsible adults, are against any sexual contact between an adult and minor, no matter the circumstances. If you really feel drawn to such a relationship with a teacher, or feel that you are really in love and this goes beyond the boundaries of normal society, a reputable mentor will still respect your age—and the law—by waiting until you are of legal age to give consent. Though they are not everywhere, people with evil intentions exist. Beware of these "teachers" in the Craft and learn to question their authority.

a witch, sex can be a form of worship; by pleasing your partner, you are worshipping the divine god within them. It can be a great way to introduce the spirituality of magick and Wicca to a partner who is not involved in the practice.

Orientation

Witchcraft is tolerant and open to all forms of sexuality. Our motto is “Do what ye will,” so as long as it is between consenting adults, harming none. If this is the case, most witches will not judge. In the ritual poem “The Charge of the Goddess,” the Goddess states, “All acts of love and pleasure are *my* rituals.” People, myself included, often quote this passage to show how witches welcome gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders, polyamourists, and anyone questioning their sexual or gender identity.

Witches recognize that we all have male and female energy within us, and their balance is sacred. Different people have different balances. Witchcraft is one of the few religions that encourages you to explore your sexual identity and will accept you and cherish you as it grows and changes. Though there are some traditions fixated on fertility as a literal heterosexual concept, many see the fertility aspect of our path as both literal and metaphorical. Many in the Craft may lean toward polyamory or polyfidelity. Some have open sexual relations. Many others have what would be considered “traditional” relationships. As a gay man myself, I have found that, on the whole, the pagan community tries to be understanding and supportive of each person’s balance of male and female energies.

Masturbation

Witchcraft is also perfectly accepting of masturbation. It is not a sin. It will not cause you to go blind or grow hair on your palm. No one can tell if you do or do not masturbate. Various studies suggest that the vast majority of boys and men do masturbate regularly. It’s natural and a part of life. I know if I don’t have a regular release, I tend to be more susceptible to colds and the flu. It’s just a personal quirk about my own body and energy. As you grow older, you will get to know your own body, your own temple, better.

Masturbation can also be used in solo sex magick, as a way to send your energy and intent into the universe. At the moment of orgasm you focus your intent on a symbol, a sigil, that represents your desire. Though different than sex magick done with a partner, solo sex magick is very easy and powerful.

Acting Responsibly

As sex is powerful, magickal, and sacred, it should not be entered into lightly. Many people imagine a witches' gathering as an indiscriminate orgy. For some, it can be, but that has not been my experience. Though witches do not subscribe to Christian concepts and morals regarding sex, we do take sex seriously and act responsibly. Sex is magickal energy, and just as I wouldn't enter a ritual without reflecting on that spiritual intimacy, I wouldn't dream of having sex with someone without thinking about how this will affect me emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Sex is energy and when you have sex, your energies merge with your partner's. Sometimes it can be very helpful, beautiful, and pleasurable. But for some, without any reflection and communication, it can cause great heartache.

If you are going to be sexually active, don't take it lightly or enter into it foolishly. Under any circumstances, it is special and powerful. Communicate with your partner. Make sure you both understand what you are getting into and are prepared for it. Make sure you both understand the level of commitment. For some, having sex is a long-standing commitment and a desire to build a life together. For others, it's recreational and fun, based only in that moment. To a witch, either view is all right, as long as you both agree to it and no one is getting hurt or being used.

Witches are practical and educated. We see the mystical and the mundane. At the risk of sounding like a health teacher, I'm including information I hope you all know. You must know the risks involved in sex. Yes, there are risks. It's not all about pleasure. In heterosexual unions, there is the possibility of pregnancy, even if birth control is used. No contraceptive is 100 percent effective. Most importantly, it is not just your girlfriend's "problem." You must take responsibility for your actions.

There is also the possibility of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). They affect everyone, gay and straight. They don't just affect "bad" people and don't just strike people who are promiscuous. Witches don't believe illness is a divine punishment for bad behavior, but it is a part of life. Some diseases are temporary; some are lifelong problems that can be controlled, and some can be fatal. Most people think it could never happen to them, but it does. I help many clients with both the physical and emotional problems that come up with STDs. I have one client who got herpes from her second encounter with someone whom she thought was going to be a long-term, trusted partner. She is a "good" person, an excellent witch, and asked the right questions, but still

she was struck by it. STDs can be scary. If you plan on being sexually active, educate yourself before doing anything. Once you are active, get tested regularly. There are many community resources available. Communicate with your partner and always be honest.

Just because witchcraft is so accepting of sexuality, it doesn't mean it encourages you to enter into sexual activity before you are ready. It is not mandatory or expected. You can be a powerful witch and be celibate. You must do whatever is right for you. You must reflect and make your own decisions and live by the consequences.

Some strains of Eastern magick require that you refrain from sexual activity, even masturbation, but they are part of age-old traditions with very specific ideas about energy. It is not a moral judgment, but a practical one from an Eastern point of view. You conserve energy through abstinence. Witches believe you can move energy regardless of your level of sexual activity, as long as you are aware of the energy. For myself, I chose to remain a virgin until college. I knew that I was not emotionally ready for sex outside of a relationship and that I could easily become addicted to the sensation. But I also knew I was not in a place to have a sexually active relationship. I dated and experimented, but I waited until I was ready—and educated—before becoming sexually active. Waiting is what was right for me. You might need something else, but think about things before you act.

Exercise: What Are Your Feelings about Sexuality and Partners?

Take the time to answer this question in your Book of Shadows. It's better to think about things before a situation comes up than to deal with it on the spot. Are you educated on all the mundane facts about sexual health? Many people think they are, but soon realize they are not.

INTOXICANTS AND DRUGS

Just as many people expect witches' circles to be wild orgies, some expect them to be dens of drugs and alcohol. They are not. Sacred plants are found in shamanic and witchcraft traditions. Tales of flying ointments are not literally to fly through the air, but to release your spirit to fly in the otherworlds and speak with spirits and gods. Medieval witches used ointments made from a variety of psychedelic and poisonous plants to aid

them in astral travel. Wine is often used in ritual to open the gates for meditation and psychic work.

Though natural mind-altering substances can be used in ritual, there is a lot of training that goes along with their use. They were used by cultures that did not use them recreationally. In the Craft, there is a respect for the plant spirits, and often mind-altering substances are made by those who will also use them—unlike the drugs you get at a party or on the street.

Synthetic drugs are not only unregulated and illegal, but lack any type of natural connection to a plant spirit that would be your ally in spellwork. Magickal practitioners believe that each plant has a spirit, a consciousness, used for healing. When you use that plant, internally or as part of a magickal charm, you ally yourself with its spirit. It acts as a guardian, guide, and teacher.

Many people first open up to magickal reality through an experience with mind-altering substances—natural or synthetic. I have many friends who came to the Craft and shamanism through a profound vision or journey induced by a drug. When you alter your consciousness, witches say you “open the gates” to the other worlds. Though most have a recreational experience, or chalk up any visions to a mindless hallucination, others are awakened, receiving insights and information that create a profound shift. Seemingly by accident, these people are initiated into a new realm of consciousness, and will never be the same again. Some continue their experimentations, often with mixed results, while others seek out mystical understanding and training, a foundation and perspective from which to frame the experience and grow from it. The drug experience serves as a catalyst. Those who continue to solely use substances without further training often get addicted to the profound peak experience, and use more and more, trying to have a more enlightening vision each time. They can head into dangerous territory, using chemicals in high doses or with alarming frequency.

For those with magickal training, restraint is part of that training—knowing how much is enough and how much is too much. Personally, I think a lot of people use alcohol and drugs in magick as a crutch, and they haven’t learned to use their inner technology or ritual. There is an art and science to altering your consciousness solely through your will, and most magickal practitioners learn that first, before using substances to enhance special rituals. Meditation is a key to altered consciousness. Well-designed ritual is another. Under the right conditions, mind-altering substances can be a great tool,

but most people abuse them, and I suggest keeping away from using such tools unless you have a lot of knowledge, and perhaps are working with someone who has used them successfully. They are not traditionally used in a daily spiritual context, but to augment your experience during specific and special rituals and times of the year. Many of the witches' "flying" herbs are deadly poisons, requiring a strong knowledge of the herbs and dosages, along with a spiritual link to the plants. Any mistake could be fatal. Again, just as with sex, be intelligent and responsible with your actions.

As a group that holds responsible thought and action as principle goals, most witches seek to break their addictions in order to gain a greater sense of mastery over themselves and greater bodily health. The body is sacred and must be maintained. Little vices and simple pleasures are one thing if they harm none, but self-destructive behavior is not encouraged. Beware of any type of addiction, and if you find yourself addicted to anything, legal or illegal, seek out help in breaking that addiction. Many programs and services exist. Seek out support in your family and community. Breaking addictions frees much of your psychic energy to be used in your magick and spiritual growth.

Straight-edgers

Some teens and adults are a part of the punk straight-edge movement. They don't use drugs or alcohol, and they focus on the music. At shows, they mark their hands with Xs in black marker—a sign usually used by club owners to denote someone under the drinking age at an all-ages show. At first, the X prevented teens from trying to order at the bar. Now that the straight-edgers have taken control of the X, it is the symbol of something larger. It reminds me of the X used in neutralization spells. There is something magickal to the straight-edge scene. There are some straight-edge witches out there who focus on other means to achieve altered states of consciousness.

Alternatives

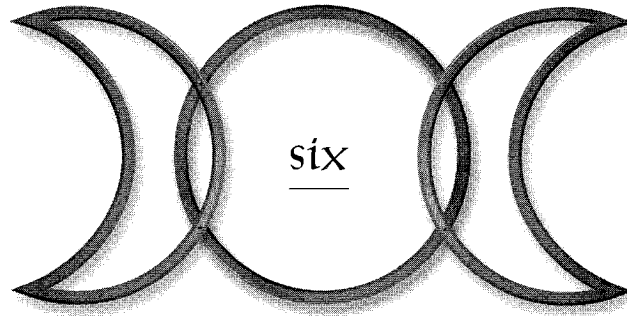
Safer intoxicants you can experiment with include tribal music with a strong beat, trance dancing, incense, and oils. Though technically not chemical intoxicants, herbal allies found in oils and incense are classified as such by traditional witches. Anything that helps "open the gates" and moves you can be used to induce a trance state. Staring into a piece of art or a mirror acts like a gateway to magick. The smell of sage, mugwort, frankincense, myrrh, rose, lavender, and sandalwood alter my consciousness. Dancing, singing, and playing an instrument are all ways to change your consciousness. I know

when I go to a show, club, or even listen to music in my room lit by only a few candles, I open the gates to a different state of mind.

Exercise: Opening the Gates

Think about what “opens the gates” for you and gets you into a magickal state of mind, even if it is something you don’t associate with Wicca. My favorite is listening to music. Then, whatever it is, do it, and think about how it changes your mood and viewpoint. Observe the effect that different kinds of music and scent, alone and combined, have on you. Try to find the magick in everything you do, and see how everyday things can open you to a magickal reality. Record your observations in your Book of Shadows.

These are some pretty important parts to witchcraft—responsibility, power, privacy, religion, sexuality, and substance use. They might seem too big for a book intended for young guys, but you are heading toward manhood and need to face them. They aren’t the only parts of the Craft that are serious, and every witch thinks a bit differently about them. But that’s the point—witches think about them before acting. Witches think for themselves. We question everything and learn from books, teachers, and experience, but we always think before we act. If you want to be true to the Craft, practice thinking for yourself in all areas of your life.



The Way of Ritual: Remembering You Are Sacred

Rituals are passed through families, communities, and traditions. The rites of one generation are passed from mother to son, father to daughter, and elder to student. Unfortunately, so many of our rituals have been lost, and most that remain have lost their original meaning. I grew up participating in Catholic rituals but didn't really understand them or feel any magick with them. Without the rituals of magick and tradition, we forget who we are as a people and a planet. I think part of the reason we have so many problems in the world—including the environment, politics, social equality, and the global economy—is because we're divorced from the magick of our rituals, and our lives have lost meaning as a result.

In pagan days, the idea of sacredness was tied to the land. To harm the land was to harm yourself and your family. Your community's spiritual health was tied to the land you lived on and the land of your ancestors. If you were in a good relationship with the land, the land reflected it. In forgetting the Goddess, we have forgotten the land. You

Ritual vs. Routine

When I describe it like that, rituals don't sound very different from routines or habits, do they? But they are far different. Rituals are magick. They create a magick consciousness. The trick is keeping conscious. Routines and habits are unconscious. They are empty. There is no awareness behind them. When you do ritual, you are aware of the power of it, and use its power to create a magical change in yourself and the world around you.

find the theme of sacred land in the stories of Camelot, King Arthur, and Merlin, as well as in many other stories from other cultures. But the tales of the Round Table are particularly helpful to show how to restore our relationship with the land- and earth-based spirituality because these myths show a time when paganism was dying out and being replaced by Christianity, yet some versions of the myth show an ideal of how the two can coexist and complement each other. One does not have to drive out the other. The quest for the Grail is the quest for the Goddess, and for restoring health of the individual and the society through restoration of the sacredness of the land. Rituals based upon the Grail myths urge us to restore our relationship, as individuals, with the land and as a whole world.

In our return to paganism through Wicca, we can return to the sacredness of the land through the Goddess. We find the divine gods in the Earth, sky, Moon, Sun, and stars. Those of us in the next age who find the power of the land and nature will be the ones called to bring healing to the environment, politics, society, and the global economy. They must be healed and transformed on many levels, from the mundane to the magickal. Through our modern pagan rituals, we find the sacredness of the land again and, in turn, find our own sacredness. Only then will the world find balance.

WHAT IS RITUAL?

The word "ritual" seems so mysterious, but basically a ritual is a set of repeated motions that acts as a trigger to change your consciousness. The meditation technique we learned is a type of ritual. When you do it, your body and mind prepare to meditate. You have all sorts of rituals that become your routine. If you have a glass of orange juice in the morning and the sweet, sharp taste helps wake you up, that is a ritual. It changes your consciousness. If you come home and take off your shoes and listen to music to relax, that is a ritual. If you stand under every Full Moon and imagine yourself in a circle of silver light, that is a ritual too. Each is a different type of ritual, but they're all important to us.

WHY DO RITUAL?

So why do we do ritual? What is the point of creating a magickal consciousness? What practical, real-world benefits does it offer? Too many to count, from my experience!

Ritual helps us remember our sacredness. It is the foundation of creating sacred space. All space is sacred, from the woods and the beach to your bedroom and your backyard, but when you focus on a space and align yourself with the directions, you begin a special relationship with it. You respond to it, and sacred space responds to you.

Remembering that you and your world are sacred is more important than you might think. I know many of my problems stemmed from not knowing that there was a place for me in the world, that I had a purpose. I felt alone, lost, and confused. Because of my religious upbringing I thought there was something wrong with me—my interest in the occult, my psychic experiences, and my views on sexuality. The rituals of my upbringing only seemed to reinforce the notion that I wasn't as sacred or holy as I really was. If I had been in touch with my own sacredness growing up, I think I would have had a lot fewer problems.

When you have this relationship to nature and sacred space, you open the gateway between the worlds. You create regular space and time for listening to the universe and the gods and goddesses, and for speaking with the universe. Quiet rituals are a time and place for problem solving, to sort out issues, and find balance in our lives. You create space and time for magick. Ritual harmonizes you with the cycles of nature, making you clearer, healthier, more relaxed, more stable, and more creative. When I started meditating and doing ritual regularly, my allergies and other health problems cleared up. I became happier with myself and had a greater confidence in my abilities, appearance, and knowledge.

Ritual creates a bridge between you and the divine. Through your divine connection, you become empowered. You are your own priest. Though we look to elders with respect, you don't need any person or institution to do ritual for you. You become the bridge, the connecting circuit. Naturally for you become a bridge for yourself, and you become a bridge between your community and the spiritual. Bridges have not only been broken between different countries and ethnic groups but between the physical and the spiritual. Bridge-making is what witches have always done, and this is what is desperately needed to heal our world. By doing ritual regularly, not only for yourself but for the world, you add to the healing of the planet. Healing gods are strongly associated

with rainbows, bridges, and walking between worlds. With ritual, you, too, become a healing bridge-maker.

THE MAGICK CIRCLE

The magick circle ritual is the primary ritual of witches. The circle creates a boundary for our sacred space. It creates this special space by blocking out unwanted influences and energy. In olden days, witches and magicians would say the circle blocks out evil spirits. It also contains the energies you want inside the circle, like creating a giant cauldron. Through spellwork, song, chant, dance, and powerful intent, witches raise energy in the circle. In the spiritual “cauldron” of the magick circle, you add the energies you want, like adding ingredients to soup. The cauldron contains magick and prevents things you don’t want from getting into it. Your magick is like the soup of the cauldron. The fire helps boil the energies together, magnifying the intentions and spells done in the circle. You can do magick outside of the circle, but when you are doing something in the magick circle, it is always more powerful. When the “soup” is done, you can then share it with the world.

I love this cauldron image of the circle, since so many goddesses and gods are associated with the cauldron. Seek out Cerridwen, Taliesin, Dagda, Bran, Branwen, Arawn, and Cernunnos for stories of the magickal cauldrons. They are vessels of inspiration, rebirth, healing wisdom, and abundance.

Witches often have a physical cauldron to burn herbs, wood, and paper with a spell written on it, or to brew potions. I put my black cauldron in the center of my circle, to symbolize the entire circle.

The magick circle has several basic components to it: casting the circle, calling the four quarters, anointing, the Great Rite, the work, and releasing the circle. And although the circle is always a part of the traditions of modern witchcraft, there are many variations to it. Each witch might do it slightly different. The poetry can vary. As long as you understand all the parts, you can adapt them to suit your own style of magick.

THE ALTAR

Before doing a magick circle ritual, most witches set up an altar. An altar is a magickal workplace. It reminds you of the sacred powers of witchcraft. It is also a protected space, and you can leave candles, spells that are in progress, and any item that holds significance for you on your altar.

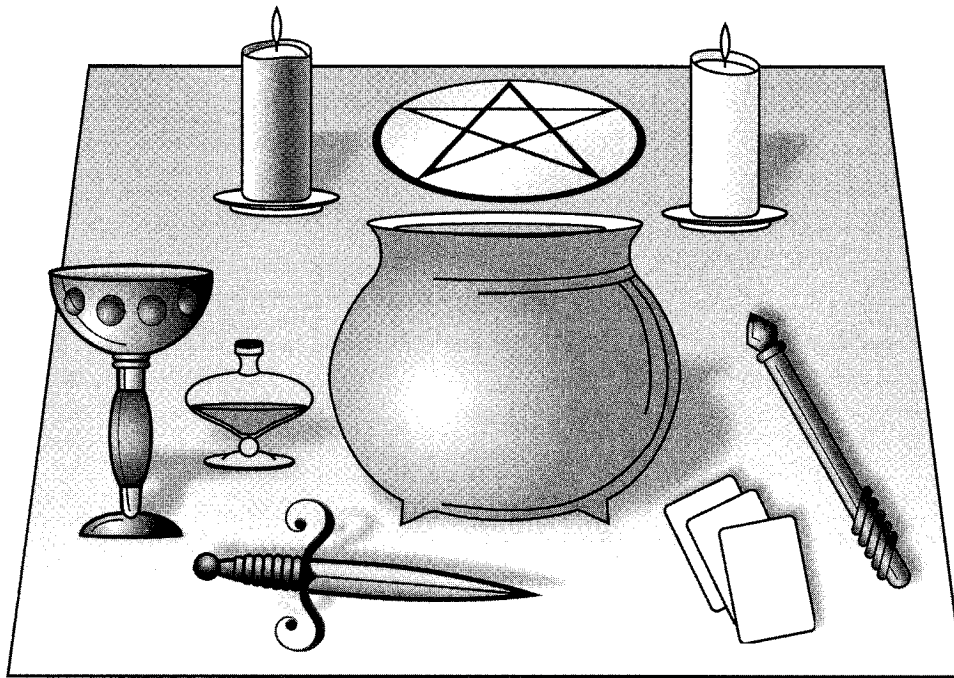


Figure 17: Altar

You can have an altar permanently set up in your room or home if that works for you. Many witches who are in the broom closet, only set up an altar when they need it and then take it down and hide the tools when they don't. A friend of mine keeps all her tools in a trunk at the foot of her bed, and when she does magick, she uses the trunk as her altar. Most books will show the altar in the center of the circle, but if you have your altar pushed up against the wall, that's fine too. Just imagine the circle around the entire room, including the altar, when it's time to cast the circle.

The altar represents the circle. Each ritual tool represents a force used in the ritual and is a vessel for that energy. The layout of the altar is like a map. It can serve as a reminder of how to build the circle. Usually altars face north, and the circle begins and ends in the north. If the altar won't fit in the north due to space and room arrangement, put it where it feels best to you and arrange your altar accordingly. You can't do it wrong if it feels right and makes sense to you. Witches are first and foremost practical people.

North or East?

Though the tradition of witchcraft I practice and teach emphasized the importance of magnetic north and assumes you are in the Northern Hemisphere, many other traditions of witchcraft and magick emphasize the Sun, and start in the east, for the rising Sun. Both work just fine, but show there are many ways to do something. Many witches in the Southern Hemisphere start in the south, because of their greater proximity to the southern magnetic pole.

We do what works. So find the way that works for you. I once had my altar in the south because of the layout of the windows and door in my bedroom. That was the only place I had room for an altar. I just remembered to start my ritual facing north, but then I did my work facing south toward the altar. It was fine, and my spells worked.

Usually the altar is covered by an altar cloth. It's functional because it protects the altar from hot wax and spilled oils, but the altar cloth is also ceremonial. Different colors have different properties, as you will learn in the next chapter. You can match your altar cloth color with the intention you have for your magick. Some change their altar cloths with the seasons. I prefer just a basic, all-purpose black or white altar cloth.

Creating an Altar

On the altar, witches keep their main spiritual tools. Each tool represents a universal power that is a part of the circle. The tools act as a focus for our energies in ritual, but each tool, once it is cleansed and blessed to be a magickal tool, actually stores energy and intention and helps us create our magick. Certain tools have certain powers based on their shape or the materials they are made of. Things made of brass, gold, or other bright metals are more masculine in energy. Things of silver are more feminine and Goddess oriented. All metals, minerals, woods, and colors have inner properties to them. I'll go over the essential tools in a bit.

Besides the traditional ritual tools, you need a few other things on your altar. I always have two candles, a black one on the left of my altar for the Goddess and a white one on the right for the God. Sometimes I will have a special candle in the center for the Great Spirit. Although there is no "wrong" way to create your altar, traditionally the left side of the altar is more feminine and the right side is more masculine. I put the cauldron near the center as well, to represent the circle and all its powers. Some other items are strictly functional. I will have matches, incense, oils, and potions—whatever I need—on the altar for easy use during rituals. But the most important things on an altar are the tools of the four elements.

Witches have special traditional tools for the four elements. The four elements are earth, water, air, and fire. Each one represents a power found in nature—and found in us. You see them depicted in the Magician tarot card. Each element also relates to one of

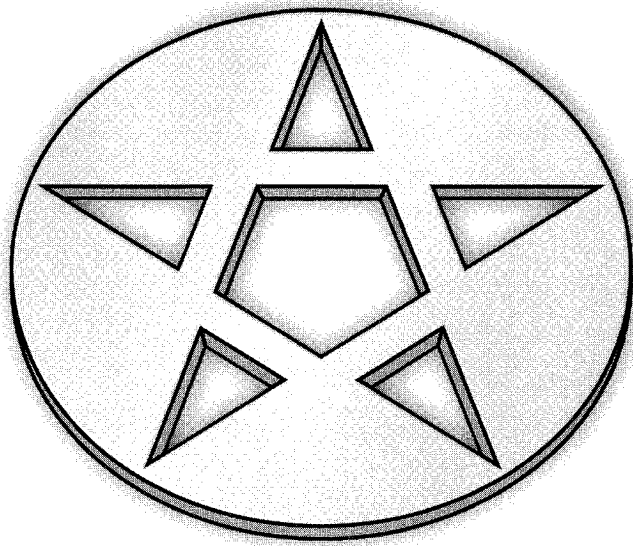


Figure 18: Peyton

the four cardinal directions, and the element's tool is placed in the appropriate position for that direction. Different traditions of witchcraft place the elements in different directions, but as long as you use all four, your magick will work. The following are the placements I first learned and still use today.

The order of the elements below are given from the most dense (the heaviest and closest to what science calls reality) to the least dense (the lightest and closest to spiritual reality)—earth, water, air, and fire. In ritual, the order is different. They are usually called starting with earth in the north, and then moving clockwise around the directions—fire in the east, air in the south, and water in the west.

Earth

Key words: body, health, money

Symbol: stone, salt, pentacle

Direction: north

Earth is our body, our physical power. Earth relates to anything in the world, from our health and food to money and home. Earth is an element relating to the Goddess, because Earth the planet is seen as the mother. The tool of earth is anything solid. You can

use a stone, crystal, or bowl of sea salt. In tarot cards, earth is symbolized by the suit of pentacles (called discs or coins in some decks), so some witches use the pentacle, a five-pointed star in a circle, to represent the physical world. A larger ritual pentacle is called a peyton, or peten, and it can be made out of metal, wood, or even sturdy cardboard or fancy paper. Some use the pentacle to represent all of the elements and put it in the center of the altar, while using a stone for the element of earth.

Water

Key words: emotion, relationship, love

Symbol: chalice, bowl of salt water

Direction: west

Water is our emotions—our hearts and our relationships. It is the power of love and healing. Water is our friends, our family, our loves of all kinds, including our love of the gods and our self-love. Water is also feminine, since many rivers and oceans are dedi-

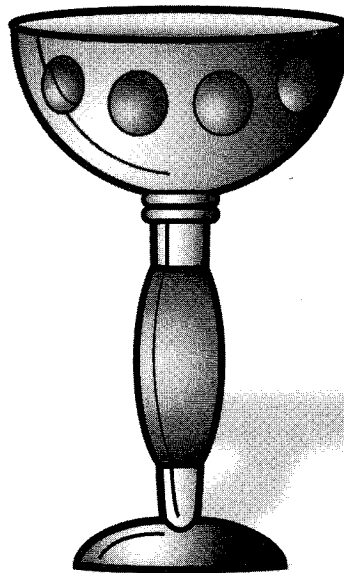


Figure 19: Chalice

cated to goddesses. Both water and earth are receptive elements, and receptivity is considered a feminine trait. The tool of water is the cup or chalice, a vessel to contain water and to drink from. The water of the chalice, once blessed, is the healing love of the Goddess. Your water tool can be a silver or clay chalice or any glass that is special for you. I've used a wine glass. Some rituals will use a bowl of salt water in addition to the chalice. The salt water is used to bless and anoint people and other tools.

Air

Key words: mind, communication, ideas

Symbol: blade, athame, sword, incense

Direction: south or east—depending on the tradition

Air is the power of the mind, of speaking and listening. Our mind is like the sky. Sometimes it is clear and calm, and other times it is cloudy or stormy. Air carries the vibration of our words from our mouths to our listeners' ears. It lets us express ourselves

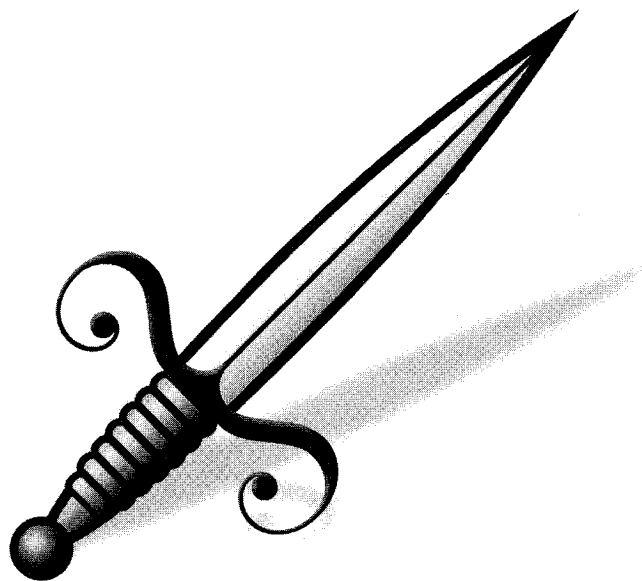


Figure 20: Athame

How Do You Say “Athame”?

I’ve heard the word “athame” pronounced many different ways, and some seem to depend on where you learned the Craft and from what tradition. I learned to pronounce it [ah-THA-may]. Others put the stress on the last syllable, [ah-tha-MAY]. Some start with a long *a* sound, [a-THA-may] or [a-tha-MAY]. Most witches who learn from books pronounce it with long *a* in the second syllable and a silent *e*, [a-tham].

and our ideas. Air is considered masculine, since many sky and storm gods exist. The tool of air is the blade, because blades are sharp and to the point, and in old myths, blades defend the truth. In tarot, the air element is represented by the suit of swords. In witchcraft, the witch’s blade is a double-edged knife called an athame. Although they are usually not sharp (since they are not used to cut anything physical), it can be hard to get such a blade. In a pinch, you can use any pointed symbol for your blade, from a nice letter opener to a fancy butter knife.

Along with a blade, incense can be used for the element of air. I prefer all-natural incenses because they carry the magick of plants with them. Most witches use basic clearing, protection, and temple incenses such as frankincense,

myrrh, sage, cedar, mugwort, lavender, sandalwood, copal, cinnamon, and patchouli. Learning to make your own incense is a time-honored tradition among witches. To learn more about incense, I suggest studying *The Complete Book of Incense, Oils and Brews* by Scott Cunningham.

Fire

Key words: soul, energy, will

Symbol: wand, torch, candle

Direction: east or south—depending on the tradition.

Fire is the power of the soul, its passion and drive. Whatever excites us is in the fire element. Fire is our divine inspiration. Some use fire energy for career. Others use it for romance, while a smaller group uses it for art and music. Fire is the quest for who you are as an individual. It is your will and power. Fire is masculine in nature, like the sun and fire gods. Air and fire are considered to be energetically projective. Fire radiates energy out and projects light, considered a masculine trait. The tool of fire is the magick wand, though a torch or candle can be used symbolically. Wands direct your will and are used to create a magick circle. You can use your wand for healing and magick.

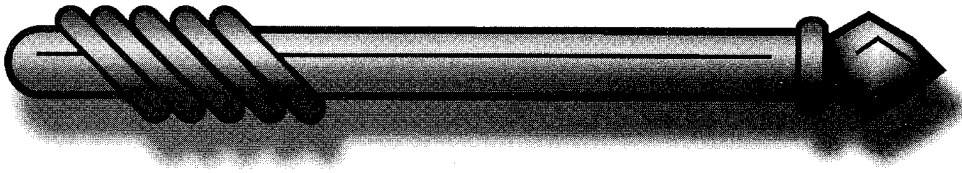


Figure 21: Wand

Wands

Wands are so special and have so much variety that they deserve their own special section. Wands can be made out of wood, metal, clay, crystal, or glass. Usually they measure from the tip of your finger to your elbow, but that's not a rule, especially if you are still growing.

I have several wands, including one that is a small, three-inch quartz crystal point I use when traveling, one that is a foot-long copper tube, one that is fifteen-inch piece of willow wood, and one that is a large oak staff almost as tall as I am. My friend Lynne just gave me an antique brass skeleton key to be used as a wand when traveling, and I love it. I keep it on my key chain so I always have it on hand. You can, obviously, have more than one wand. You can buy them commercially or make and decorate them yourself.

If you live somewhere where you can walk in the woods, go on a quest for a wand. Traditional books say you should cut the wand from a living tree after meditating with the tree and asking permission from the tree spirit. Then, if you get permission, you offer it three copper coins in return. I've never done this. I can't justify cutting off a branch when I feel so many branches are offered to me already. Some think that if the branch hits the ground first, it loses power, but I think if you have the blessing of the tree, then you have all the power you need. My red oak staff taught me that.

I loved the three oak trees in my backyard and wanted a staff, but I couldn't reach any of the branches and didn't really want to cut them down anyway. I would sit and meditate with the trees. I just liked to be between them, my Triple Goddess trees. Then, one night during a lightning storm, a perfect-size branch broke off and rolled down the hill toward my bedroom window. I knew it was for me and immediately began fashioning it into a staff. I peeled the bark off, sanded it down, and then used a wood burner to make an image of a dragon in it. I wrapped the top and bottom with copper wire to conduct energy and placed a quartz-crystal point at the top with glue and wire.

My Altar, My Self

Sometimes you just can't have an altar with tools. Your parents won't allow it. You don't want to tell anyone. You are away at college and not out of the broom closet with your roommate. There can be a lot of reasons. Recently a friend shared with me an Internet post by a guy named Ladon who had the same problem. His post was called "My Altar, My Self," and he shared how he looked into the mirror every time he needed an altar. In his image, he saw the polarity of God and Goddess in his masculine and feminine traits. He has the four elements in his body. His bones and structure were earth. His blood was water. His lungs and voice were air. His metabolism, his energy, was fire.

The altar is a powerful tool, and it's great if you can have one, but you are never without your tools because you have your body.

If you find a branch that calls to you, thank the tree and forest for it, and take it home. You can keep it plain or decorate your new wand however you would like. Paint, glue, glitter, crystals, and wire are all ways to personalize it. If you don't want a wooden wand, get copper pipe from the hardware store. Cap off or cork one end and fill it with crystals or herbs before you close off the other. Look for other objects that could be used as a wand, from a big cooking spoon to a screwdriver. Be creative in your quest for a wand.

Cleansing and Blessing Your Tools

Before you use your tools, each one should be cleansed of any unwanted energies and blessed, or charged. When you charge a ritual tool, you are placing your intention into it. With the energy of your intention, the tool will work best for you and your magick.

To cleanse anything, pass it through a cleansing incense. If you don't like smoke, you can anoint it with salt and water. You can also simply hold it and imagine it filling with dazzling white light. The light and your intention will purify it.

Once the tool is cleansed, you charge it by holding it in your hands. Focus your attention on it. Feel your energy, your pulse, and its energy merge. Using your will, place your intention for the tool into it. If you're charging your chalice, place the intention of the Goddess and the element of water. For your blade, place the intention of the God and air. For the wand, use the intention of the God and fire. For your stone, place the intention of the Goddess and earth. Charge your candles too. The black candle holds the energy of the Goddess and is charged for drawing in energy, since black absorbs energy. The white candle is for the God and is charged for sending out energy, since white reflects light. You can charge all your tools before you cast the circle or charge them one by one before you use them in each part of the ritual and after you have cast your circle.

You should also cleanse yourself and the space where you will do your ritual prior to any work. Smudge (you smudge something when you fill or cover it with incense smoke) the space with incense, sprinkle it with salt water, or fill it with dazzling light.

Many traditions use cleansing baths before ritual, but it's not required. You can anoint yourself, smudge yourself, or fill yourself with light instead of taking a cleansing bath before ritual.

CASTING THE CIRCLE

Casting the circle is the creation of your sacred space. A witch ritually casts out a ring of light to surround himself, for protection and containing the energy raised during the ritual. When casting the circle, I visualize myself in a circle of colored light. I start by pointing my wand to the north and imagining energy from the earth and sky coming through my feet and head, mixing in my heart, and going out my arm and through the wand as a beam of light. The wand magnifies my will and projects the light. Usually I picture the circle in white light, but sometimes it is electric blue, violet or emerald green. I trace a circle of light, either by walking the circle or by rotating my body with my wand outstretched. I make three clockwise—or what witches call *deosil* (a Celtic word, pronounced [jed-sil] though most modern witches pronounce it [deo-sil]) or sunwise—circles to create my sacred space.

CALLING THE QUARTERS

After casting the circle, I call the four quarters, which are the four directions and the elemental powers associated with them. Each quarter is represented by a spirit in the circle. Some traditions call upon angels, animal totems, or gods. They are the spirits that balance the energies and only let the right amount of energy into the circle.

The spirit for each direction, also referred to as an elemental guardian or watchtower, helps to regulate the amount of elemental energy in the circle, making sure the proper balance for your magick is maintained. The energy of each element is embodied by spirits called elementals. In medieval magick, the elementals are embodied by mythic forms. Earth elementals are pictured as gnomes (dwarlike men), air elementals as sylphs (tiny faerylike creatures with gossamer wings), water elementals as undines (also known as mer-folk), and fire elementals are called salamanders or drakes (fire lizards). The elemental guardians are spirits that direct the elementals in your magick.

The four elements are the powers of creation. If you want to perform magick, you need to work with all four elements. Fire is your will, the spark of creation. If you are

Natural Tools

If you don't have access to traditional ritual tools, don't let that stop you from making an altar. If you can't have an altar in your home, perhaps you can make one as you need it. You can use stones for earth, sticks for wands, a simple bowl or cup for water, and a butter knife for air. I often do rituals out in the forest, taking no tools and just using what I find in the woods.

not in touch with this spark, your spell will have no energy. Air is the mental component, the concept behind the spark, the purpose of your magick. Water is the shape and form, and the emotion you put into your magick. Lastly, earth is the manifestation, making your intention a reality.

Casting a circle and calling the quarters is a ritual to put you into direct contact with the elements. The circle protects you from outside forces, but also contains the forces of your magick, until you direct them with your magickal intention. The guardians of the four directions are your spiritual allies. They anchor the circle, making it secure to contain these energies, protecting you from unwanted forces outside your circle, and regulating the amount of elemental energy you need for each act of magick.

Here are the four quarters and their common associations.

Earth

Animals: bull, bear, goat, stag

Angel: Uriel

Gods: Modron, Nephthys, Tailltiu, Frigga, Cernunnos, Pan

Fire

Animals: ram, fox, lion, horse

Angel: Michael—when called from the south

Gods: Mabon, Horus, Lleu, Lugh, Rhiannon, Baldur, Hephaestus

Air

Animals: crow, hawk, falcon, dragonfly

Angel: Raphael—when called from the east

Gods: Isis, Arianrhod, Gwydion, Pryderi, Hera, Zeus, Athena, Taliesin, Macha

Water

Animals: salmon, dolphin, whale, crab

Angel: Gabriel

Gods: Anubis, Mannanan, Cerridwen, Osiris, Poseidon

The fifth element, spirit, is in the center. It is embodied by the Goddess and God and any other spirit guides you call to your circle to aid you. These five elements are the five points of a pentacle, which is also a symbol of protection. A ritual pentacle, the peyton, is held up in each direction, to act as a gateway to invite the elements in. It is then held

at the end of the ritual to release them and say farewell. If you don't have a peyton, simply hold up your hand. In the five points of your fingers you have a peyton built right in!

Once the circle is created and anchored by the four quarters, you have created sacred space, balancing your body, heart, mind, and soul with the divine spirits. There, you do your magick.

ANOINTING

Many traditions of Wicca anoint participants with salt and water, oil, or a protection potion of some sort. They do this as both a blessing and a final step to cleanse before any further ritual work is done. These potions protect us from ourselves and our unwanted thoughts and fears. Most witches start out with a basic anointing potion, used to banish unwanted energies and give a general blessing. For now, mix a teaspoon of sea salt with a cup of water as your protection potion. Bless and consecrate it in the magick circle as you would any tool before using it.

Potion making is a complicated art. The most basic anointing potion is a simple mixture of salt and water. It mixes the elements of water and earth. Salt is good for purifying and protecting. Just mix a teaspoon of sea salt in a cup of water. You can also make an anointing oil by putting a pinch of sea salt in a small bottle of olive oil.

If you have access to essential oils, you can scent your anointing potion. Try this recipe. Once you make it, charge it in your magick circle.

¼ cup of base oil—you can use oils such as olive, grape seed, apricot kernel, or jojoba oil.
 3 drops of frankincense essential oil
 3 drops of myrrh essential oil
 1 drop of patchouli essential oil

If you want to make a simple herbal anointing potion, make this herbal tea in a base of sea salt and water. The sea salt will help preserve the potion. Sea salt-based potions can last a few years. Even if they don't spoil, the magick will eventually fade and you will need to make a new batch.

2 cups of spring water
 2 tablespoons of sea salt
 1 teaspoon frankincense
 1 teaspoon myrrh

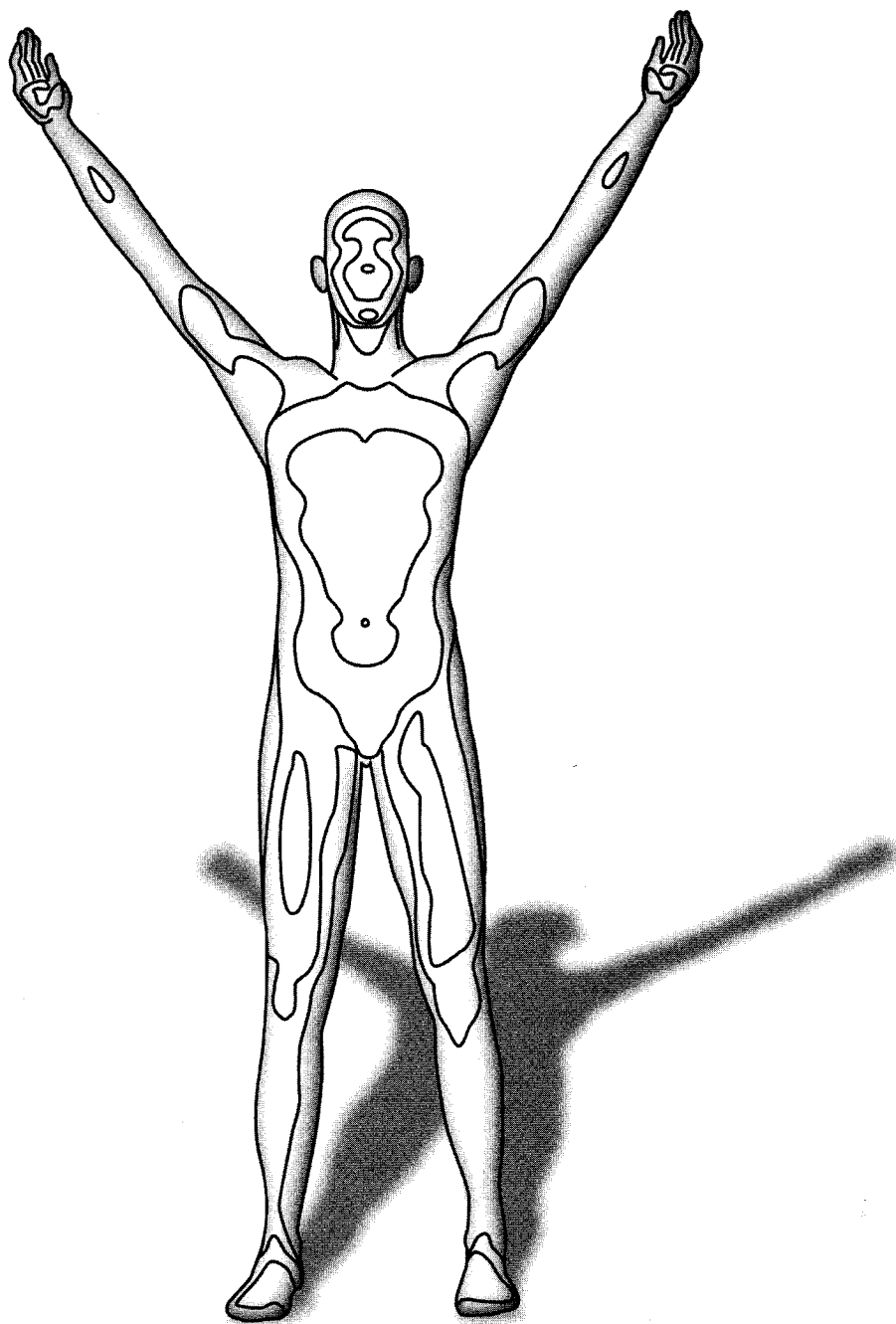


Figure 22: Goddess Position

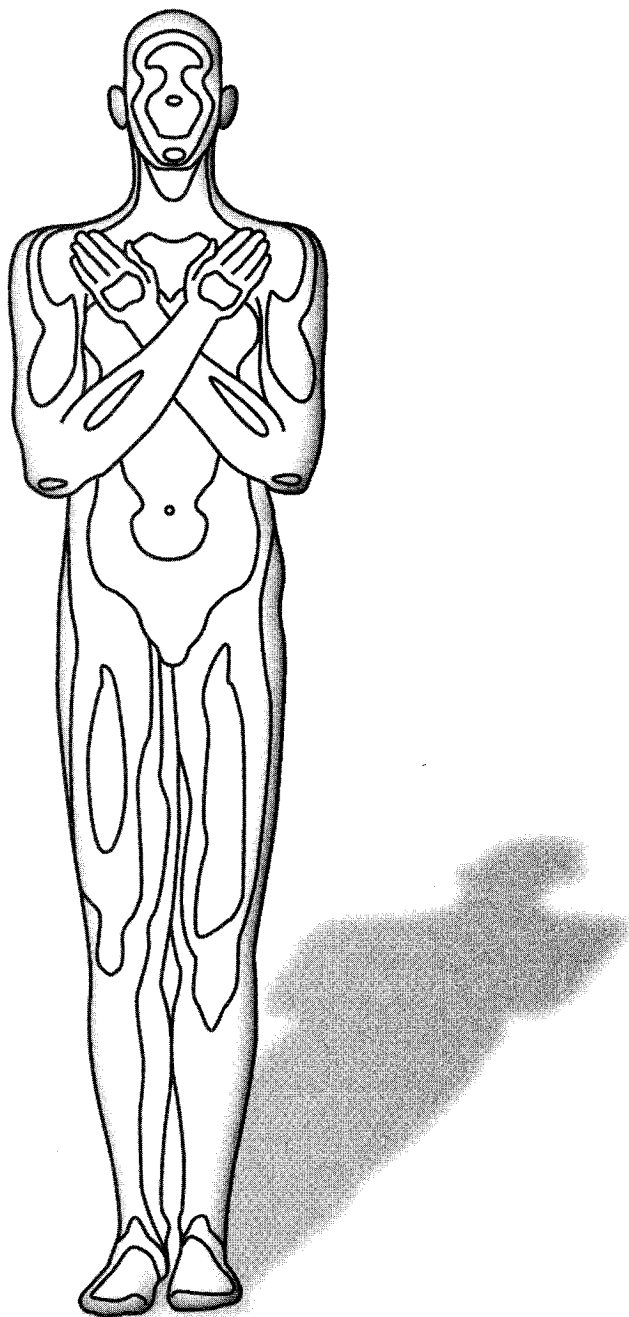


Figure 23: God Position

Ritual Preparation and Safety Tips

We think just because it's magick, it will be perfect, but mistakes can happen in a circle. It's good to have some basic ideas in mind to keep things running smoothly and safely.

Prepare in Advance

Make sure you have everything on hand when you cast the circle. Even with the best of planning, mistakes can be made and things forgotten. If that happens to you, don't freak out about it, but improvise and make do. The magick is what counts, not necessarily the tools or making it perfect. But sometimes when we forget things we get nervous, and that can lead to accidents. Relax and let the magick flow. The gods have a wonderful sense of humor, and our silly accidents can happen when we are taking ourselves much too seriously and not enjoying our magick. Laughter, even at ourselves, can be the best fuel for our magickal work.

Write Out Rituals

Many experienced witches memorize their rituals or even do them spontaneously, but this can be hard to do when you're starting out. There is nothing wrong with having your ritual written out and reading from the script while you perform the ritual. I like to write out many rituals in my *Book of Shadows*. You can just have it on hand in case you forget a part. Even if you read the whole thing from script, your ritual is still magickal. The better you learn it, the more proficient you will become, and you will no longer need notes if you don't want them.

(continued)

1 teaspoon vervain

Let simmer for ten to twenty minutes. Strain out the herbs and bottle it, keeping it out of direct sunlight.

I usually anoint both of the wrists and sometimes the third eye with the motion of a banishing pentagram, drawn from the bottom left point to the top point and completing the star, and stating the words "Blessed be."

THE GREAT RITE

Part of the magick circle is the rite known as the Great Rite, which is often combined with a ritual called Drawing Down the Moon when doing a magick circle ritual to celebrate the Moon. In the Great Rite, the energies of the Goddess and God, represented by the chalice and athame, come together in the chalice and are drunk by the witches. It is our form of sacrament. Sometimes cakes are also blessed and eaten during or after the ritual, much like Christian communion.

In group work, the high priest holds the athame blade, and the high priestess holds the chalice. Other traditions reverse it, believing that on the inner planes each of us resonates with the opposite polarity. Each feels the essence of the divine within, and brings that essence to the water or wine in the chalice. For solitary witches, we must be our own high priestess and high priest. I hold the chalice in my left hand and the blade in my right. If it's a Moon ritual, I hold my blade up to the light of the Moon. Even if I'm inside, I imagine reaching through the roof and drawing down silver light to my blade. I try to view the image of the Moon reflected in my chalice. I then plunge the blade into the chalice. This act is symbolic of the sexual union of Goddess and God, the love that created the universe. We are recreating that love in the circle. Witches call it "perfect love and perfect trust"—unconditional divine love, in other words. We

are all given it by the Goddess and God, and we all try to embody it in our lives and give it to others.

THE WORK

The work is the purpose for which we do magick and raise energy. Some circles are dedicated to a specific type of magick, such as healing. Others are eclectic, where there are multiple spells to be done, all with different intentions. Some circles don't have any work, but they are a celebration or a rite of passage. Some witches meditate in the circle as their work. This section is the main body of the ritual, whatever the reason.

The Cone of Power

When I first heard this term, I thought of the pointy wizard hats of Merlin and Gandalf or the stereotypical witch's hats on Halloween decorations, but the cone of power is not a literal object; it's a form of energy. When we do our spellwork or celebration in a circle, it is often necessary to release the energy to the universe. We raise energy in the circle, heating our "soup," and then we pour it out to the world.

This is called raising and releasing the cone of power, visualized as a burst of energy from above the circle. Some practitioners see the circle becoming a sphere of light, after the quarters are called. The cone bursts out of the top of this magickal bubble.

Witches raise their arms in the Goddess position to send the energy out, and then lower them into the God position to reflect and be open to any messages about the spell. Lastly, when all spells are done, witches reach toward the floor to ground any remaining energy, returning it to the world for the planet's own healing. The Earth can absorb and accept all sorts of natural energy we need to release, and she transforms it like she transforms fallen leaves into soil.

RELEASING THE CIRCLE

When all the work is done, the circle is released much the same way it was cast. I close with a circle of healing, placing the names of people and places that are in need of

(continued)

Be Safe

Be careful with candles, matches, and incense. If you don't like fire and smoke, you don't necessarily have to use candles or incense. Don't set off smoke detectors with smoke and flame. Some witches wear robes and forget the sleeves are long and will catch fire if you are not careful. Wear sensible clothes. You can still wear all black and not have a traditional robe if you want. I've done a lot of rituals in a black T-shirt and black jeans.

Fire Emergencies

Just in case, have something on hand to extinguish fires. I usually keep some water or sand nearby to smother flames that might get out of control. Just use your head when it comes to fire.

light and healing, and then do a miniature cone of power to send that remaining energy out. Then I thank and release all the quarters and their spirits, starting in the north and moving counterclockwise—what witches call widdershins, or against the Sun. Then I start in the north and retrace the circle once more, again going widdershins.

THE MAGICK CIRCLE RITUAL

1. Cleanse yourself and your space.
2. Set up your altar. If it is the first time you're doing a ritual, cleanse and bless all your tools. If this isn't your first circle with these tools, you need only cleanse and recharge all your tools periodically, once every few months to once a year. The frequency is up to you.
3. Hold your wand and cast your circle three times, starting in the north and moving clockwise. Visualize light coming out from your wand and creating three perfect rings of light. I usually say:

I cast this circle to protect me from all harm.

I cast this circle to draw in the most perfect energies for this circle.

I cast this circle as a sacred space, a temple between worlds.

4. Calling the quarters. You can write many different types of quarter calls, with different spirits and poetry, but for now start simple and try this.

Face the north, hold up your left hand or the peyton,
and say:

*To the north, I call to the element of earth and the
strong bull. Hail and welcome.*

Face the east, hold up your left hand or the peyton,
and say:

*To the east, I call to the element of fire and the loyal
lion. Hail and welcome.*

Face the south, hold up your left hand or the peyton,
and say:

*To the south, I call to the element of air and the sharp
falcon. Hail and welcome.*

Face the west, hold up your left hand or the peyton,
and say:

*To the west, I call to the element of water and the loving
dolphin. Hail and welcome.*

5. Invite the Goddess and God. They are always present, but this helps you build a conscious relationship with them in the circle.

I call upon the Goddess and God to join me in this circle. Hail and welcome.

Light your candles. I usually use a black candle for the Goddess and a white candle for God.

6. Anoint yourself and any others present on the wrist with salt and water and say:

Blessed be.

7. Perform the Great Rite by holding your blade in your right hand and the chalice in the left. Hold the blade up to the sky and imagine drawing down the moonlight if at night or the sunlight if during the day. Plunge the blade into the chalice, and imagine infusing it with water. I usually say:

*As the sword is to the grail, the blade is to the chalice, the God is to the Goddess. I
drink in their blessing.*

8. Do the work. Raise the cone of power as needed, and ground the remaining energy at the end. If you desire, place the names of those in need of healing into the circle to send the remaining energy out into the world.

9. Release the quarters. Face the north, hold up your right hand or the peyton, and say:

*To the north, I thank and release the element of earth and the strong bull. Hail and
farewell.*

Face the west, hold up your right hand or the peyton, and say:

*To the west, I thank and release the element of water and the loving dolphin. Hail and
farewell.*

Face the south, hold up your right hand or the peyton, and say:

*To the south, I thank and release the element of air and the sharp falcon. Hail and
farewell.*

Face the east, hold up your right hand or the peyton, and say:

*To the east, I thank and release the element of fire and the loyal lion. Hail and
farewell.*

Magical Candles

Candles are a powerful tool used in most traditions of witchcraft. They are used in rituals, celebrations, and spells. Before you light a new candle, hold it for a moment, and think about your intention for the candle.

Some people cleanse candles first by smudging them in sage smoke, rolling them in sea salt, or imagining them in a cleansing light. Then they place their intentions into them.

If you are lighting the candle to honor the Goddess, think about the Goddess when you hold it. If you put a spell intention into it (see chapter 7), simply hold the candle and think of your spell.

Some books and teachers say it's wrong to blow out a candle; you should only snuff them out. And that's true in witchcraft, though many people don't know why. Older teachings say you offend the elemental spirits of fire or air when you blow a candle out, and they'll twist your spell as a result. I don't think most spirits take offense unless you do something intentionally offensive. In truth, when you blow on a candle, you add more of the element of air to the candle, unbalancing the original spell's energy. That's why it doesn't come out the way you want. When you need to put out a candle, snuff it out and relight it later to finish the spell. When you relight it, you will release the energy you originally put into it.

You can add energy to a candle spell by anointing the candle with a magical oil or potion. Most traditions

(continued)

10. Release the circle. Start in the north with your wand in hand, and move widdershins once, visualizing the circle dissolving away as it expands into the universe.

I release this circle to the universe to do its work. The circle is undone but not broken. So mote it be.

If you work in a group, traditional witchcraft says that if possible the group should alternate male and female while standing in the magick circle. I haven't necessarily followed that, but it can make the energy different. Whenever anyone says, "So mote it be," "Blessed be," "Hail and welcome," or "Hail and farewell," the group usually repeats it to create a sense of group harmony. Group work can be very rewarding, but also very challenging.

To explore being a son of the Goddess, sometimes it helps to have other men together to practice men's mysteries. Women's circles have been popular for quite a while, but men and boys are starting to reclaim traditions and sacred space for them to celebrate together and share what it is like to be a pagan man. Explore and see if there are any male spirituality groups in your area.

REASONS FOR RITUAL

You can do ritual for many reasons. Most people cast the circle when they want to do traditional spells. You'll learn more about spellcraft in the next chapter. Other rituals are celebrations. Most witches celebrate the eight Wheel of the Year holidays—called sabbats—in a magick circle, and you'll read more about them in chapter 8. Some are rites of passages, coming-of-age rituals that you can celebrate individually or with others. Such celebrations will be covered in detail as we continue. You can also do ritual whenever you want to commune with the divine and remember that you are sacred. Some circles have very defined purposes but

other times, we go there to meditate, to feel and to talk with the gods. We don't have to be in a circle to talk to the gods, but the circle can make our sense of connection clearer. Circles bring us clarity and a sense of being centered as we walk between the worlds. I do small rituals every day, simple things to center myself. I do ritual to relax when I feel stressed out by life. It creates an "eye" in the center of whatever storm I'm experiencing and reminds me about what's important in life. I create sacred space and ask for guidance when feeling lost. The answer might not be immediate, but it comes. Sometimes the answer comes through the synchronicity of life, through a friend or family member. I might ask a question of the gods in meditation, and not receive a direct answer, but later that week someone will bring up the topic of my question and unknowingly provide the answer to me. The gods did answer me, but used a messenger instead of calling direct.

Once when I was sick, I prayed to the Goddess and God to cure me immediately, and expected to immediately feel better. Sometimes magick works that way, but often it takes the most convenient and direct route. Modern medicine would have been the most effective route, but lacking health insurance and having a "healthy" distrust of doctors, I didn't go. Within the hour my condition severely worsened until my partner had to bring me to the emergency room. I got immediate treatment and was feeling much better the next day. Again the gods answered me, but not in the way I expected. Magick works for the end result, but doesn't always manifest in the way you expect or want. Magick flows in the easiest of directions, manifesting through what seems like random occurrences to get you to your goal.

DREAM RITUALS

One kind of ritual that I love to do, one that seems to combine spells and meditation, is dream ritual. Dream rituals are ways to program your dreams to bring you answers, guidance, and healing while you're asleep. Some problems are hard to understand con-

(continued)

anoint the candle in the middle and spread the oil out to both ends. Or if your spell is to bring something to you, you can anoint from the top down. If your spell is to remove something from your life, anoint from the bottom to the top.

Even though candles are a wonderful magical tool, they are not absolutely necessary. You might be in a situation where you can't have candles. Parents and roommates might object, or if you are in a dorm, there may be rules against candles. If so, you don't have to use them. You have a lot of other tools to use. I've had altars that were illuminated by Christmas tree lights instead of candles. You can find similar innovations in Santeria and Voodoo, so why not use them in modern witchcraft?

Do I Have to Do It That Way?

Magick is a tradition, and we do many things in a certain traditional way because it works. Traditions pass on the things that work and let go of the ideas that don't work. New traditions are always being created, and you can probably find in books and online at least twenty different ways to create a magick circle. Some start in different directions or call upon different elements in the directions or use different words. You can change the ritual, but if you do, understand why you are changing it, and be open to the results. Record your experiences. If you decide to change the circle casting, and you realize your magick isn't as strong and your spells don't work, then perhaps that technique isn't working and you should stick with tradition. If it does work, then you have discovered or rediscovered something, and should use it when you feel it's right.

The more you understand magick, the more freedom you will have to change rituals and create your own. If you don't understand a ritual well, stick with traditional ways until you do. The more you do ritual, the better you will understand it. You will find pools of inner wisdom. You will awaken ancestral or past-life memories. I believe that I rarely ever teach ritual. I just help people remember things they already know.

sciously, and we have more success when we let our inner selves work on them.

Try this ritual when you have a problem you are stuck with and can't see a solution. Or try it when you are in need of healing, either physically or on the emotional and mental levels. You can do it for artistic inspiration—for a vision to be expressed through music, word, or art.

Exercise: Dream Ritual

1. Cast your magick circle and for the work, read this statement:

I, _____, ask the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit to grant me a solution to my problem about (state your problem or question). I thank you all and ask this be for my highest good. So mote it be.

Or:

I, _____, ask the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit to grant me healing for (state your need for healing). I thank you all and ask this be for my highest good. So mote it be.

2. Release your circle, and then go to bed. Put the paper with your statement under your pillow. Don't worry about it anymore. Just keep a notebook by your bed, and if you wake up in the night or when you wake up that morning, write down the first things you remember. If you are not lucid enough to write, you can use a small, hand-held recorder so you can transcribe your thoughts later. Your dreams will answer your question or bring healing. They will give you new insight or vision. You can rewrite your experience in your Book of Shadows, and see how it helps you over time.

RITUAL MUSIC

One of the most powerful ways of raising energy and changing your consciousness is through music. Tribal people have used simple methods to make powerful, magickal forms of music. Many have ritual songs specifically for men. They are the stories of men, hunting songs, healing songs, and songs of courage.

Most guys think singing isn't manly because our culture separates music from day-to-day life. Certain types of singing are okay for men, but others are not. Singing in the shower is okay. No one hears you. Singing in public is often frowned upon, at least it was by my friends. I remember being made fun of for singing in a choir or play, while there was a little admiration when I sang in a heavy metal rock band.

In ancient cultures, of course, if you wanted music, you made it. By reclaiming our magickal heritage, we can reclaim the rituals of song. My friend Cheryl teaches music classes, and she experiments with tribal music. She encourages her teenage students to make their own instruments out of everyday objects. Tribal people make instruments out of things around them. A gourd filled with grain can be a rattle. A hollow log topped with an animal skin becomes a drum. We might not have those same materials, but you can make primal-sounding instruments out of coffee cans, milk jugs, and sticks. You can hit them for a drumlike instrument. You can fill them with tiny pebbles, corn, or rice to get a rattle or shaker sound. Use your imagination and find the sounds that appeal to you. Don't forget your voice is the instrument you carry with you always. Although I've been drawn back to simple sound and simple instruments, our modern age gives us a variety of musical options. The hip

The Rise of Horus

Long ago, when the gods walked the land of Egypt, there were four siblings, two male and two female. The brothers were Osiris and Set, while the sisters were named Isis and Nephthys. Each sister married her brother. Isis partnered with Osiris and Nephthys married Set.

Osiris became known as the good and loving king. He brought the fertile times of the Nile River. Set, however, was considered to be the jealous and unloving brother. He was the god of the raging deserts, and brought destruction.

In his jealousy, Set devised a plan. He threw a large party, inviting his siblings. There he brought out a beautiful chest, measured to fit King Osiris perfectly, but no one knew that. He asked all of the guests to lie in it, and to the one who fit best, he offered to give the chest. Every one of the gods tried. Every one of the gods failed, except Osiris. Once Osiris was in the box, Set's supporters blocked Osiris' followers and Set sealed the box, which became the first sarcophagus. Set and his followers cast the sarcophagus into the Nile to drift away. Set assumed control of the kingdom as the surviving brother.

The grieving Isis tracked down her husband. The coffin had floated into the roots of a tree and the tree became part of the palace in the Kingdom of Byblos. The tree trunk pillar held the ceiling of the palace. Isis disguised herself as an old lady to befriend the ladies of the court, even as she grieved. She
(continued)

(continued)

taught them hair weaving and perfumery. She befriended the queen and became the royal child's nurse. Once her divinity was revealed, she requested the body of her husband. Though the palace's ceiling fell, the king and queen of Byblos gave Isis her request.

Isis returned the body of Osiris home. She used her magick to resurrect her husband. Using her shape-shifting abilities, Isis became a hawk and mated with Osiris, conceiving a child. Unfortunately, Set found them and killed Osiris again, this time tearing him into at least fourteen pieces and scattering them across Egypt so he could not be resurrected.

Isis began her quest again, this time traveling down the river in a papyrus raft to find her husband's body parts. The crocodiles of the Nile knew her quest, and they did not stop her. They say the crocodiles still remember and, in honor of Isis, leave papyrus rafts alone.

Isis was aided by her sister—who was also Set's wife—Nephthys, and her son, Anubis, the jackal-headed god. Some say that Anubis was not Set's son, but the first son of Osiris. Set could not father children as a god of destruction, and Nephthys wanted a child, so Osiris aided his sister. Perhaps Set found out and this started the feud between Osiris and Set. Perhaps not. We shall never know for sure.

Isis found all of Osiris' body parts, and built a temple at each site along

(continued)

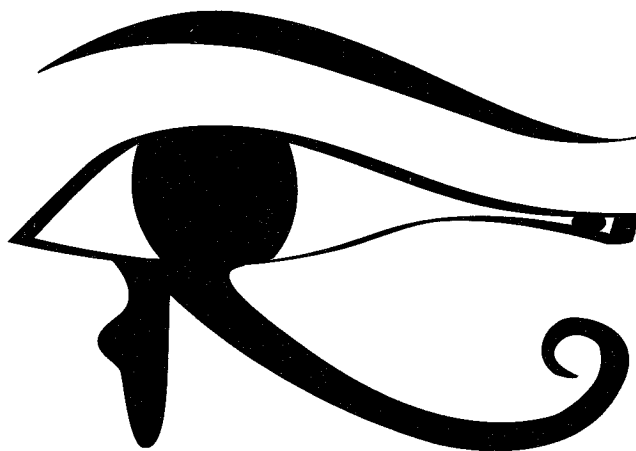


Figure 24: Eye of Horus

urban witch can use drum machines, samplers, sequencers, and digital recording software. Even if you have little musical experience, such technologies can make musical creativity very easy. If you have some musical aptitude, you can truly run wild.

I find the advantage of being able to easily record musical patterns a great advantage. I can create music, and simply play it back during my ritual.

I've used a lot of modern music as a part of ritual. Some bands, like Dead Can Dance, seems tailor-made to the rituals of witchcraft. For others, I've enjoyed tribal, primal dance remixes of popular songs. I attended an amazing Hecate ritual, and we danced around the cauldron fire, moving to a dance remix of a Tori Amos song.

Exercise: Making a Power Song

Making a power song requires no musical talent or ability. You only need a willingness to play and find the magick in

music. If you can do this with another person, or better yet, a group of people, particularly men, then you can really create a powerful sound.

Find or make your primal instruments. For this exercise, percussive instruments, particularly homemade ones, are better than traditional instruments that you might know how to play. The trick is to keep the sound primal. Primal sounds move us. Repetitive patterns in rhythm, chords, and melody can induce a magickal consciousness. Primal sounds are not restricted to percussive instruments and are incorporated into a variety of music, from the crashing chords of Stravinsky, to punk, metal, goth, and industrial music. Be creative. What sounds move you?

First think about the intention of your magick. Music can alter your consciousness and make things happen when played with intention. What kind of song do you want to create? You can pick healing, courage, wisdom, protection, or anything else you can imagine. Do you need to be inspired? Do you need to be focused for a job interview? Do you want to soothe a broken heart? Then think about the feeling your intention should have. Have everyone think about it, if you're in a group. Designate a group leader who will help start and end the song. Follow your feelings and use your instrument to bring out your feelings. Be intuitive. Don't worry about it sounding pretty or being in time or using the right notes. Just play. Express yourself.

Use your voice, but you don't have to sing traditional melodies or words. In fact, don't even use English for now. Make up your own syllables and nonsense words, but be sure that they feel right to you. Make simple sounds rhythmically. Imitate nature. Make clicking sounds like a rock dropped in water. Create thunder noises. Whistle like the wind. Imitate animal calls. Make bird noises. Hiss like a

(continued)

the Nile. The only piece she was missing was his penis, the power of his fertility and life. It was eaten by a fish in the Nile. Anubis helped embalm his uncle and thus created the first mummy. Isis again used her magick to resurrect her husband, and succeeded only partially. Since he could no longer create life, he could not be a god of life. He would forever be the god of the underworld, the realm of the dead. His son, now growing in Isis, would take on his mantle of life.

Isis gave birth to Horus, and mother and son went into hiding, still aided by Nephthys and Anubis. Set ruled the land. When Horus reached manhood, he challenged his uncle for the throne of Egypt and dominion over the gods. Horus became a warrior, the avenging god, often depicted with a hawk's head. The uncle and nephew engaged in many battles, each defeating the other in their turn, like the cycles of life and death.

Set found Horus asleep, hiding in the desert, the domain of Set, and he gouged out Horus' eyes, the Sun and Moon, in revenge. The cow-headed goddess Hathor healed Horus, bathing his eyes in gazelle's milk. Thus, the symbol of the Eye of Horus, the udjat, became a symbol of protection. Some say Hathor is an aspect of Isis. Others say she became Horus' wife.

Eventually, their conflict grew out of hand and a council of gods was called, presided over by the sun god, Ra. Each god presented his case. First the gods

(continued)

(continued)

ruled in favor of Horus, but Set threatened them with violence, so they gave victory to Set. Isis aided her son and learned the secret magickal name of Ra, which increased her magickal abilities. Some say that Horus wanted to do this on his own and got so mad at Isis' interference that he took off her head in a rage. Thoth, the god of wisdom and a faithful supporter of Horus and Isis, healed her. Many times the court of gods switched their verdict, until Osiris interceded. He gave a message to the council that if justice was not served, and Horus was not awarded victory, Osiris would let loose the dreadful things of the underworld that did not fear the gods. They saw the wisdom in this verdict and cast Set out into the desert. Horus became pharaoh, ruling over an age of peace and prosperity before he ascended with the gods. All mortal pharaohs who followed him were said to be incarnations of the divine son.

snake. Growl like a bear. But use each noise rhythmically, entering the pattern of the song you are creating.

When you are done, reflect a moment on how you feel after using your song. Did it bring out your intention? If so, you have created a magickal song. At the very least, I bet you had fun. You might feel a little silly the first few times, but that is part of the fun. When we let down our inhibitions, we can feel our inner power flow. There is no right way or wrong way to do this. Part of witchcraft is finding your true self. To do this, you have to get past the image and expectations you project to others. Being silly and playful can help.

If you enjoyed magickal music, you can use it in ritual. Try putting it before the "work" of the ritual, to raise energy that will be funneled into your magickal spell or meditation.

Continue to experiment with music and magick. You can add words, melodies, and chants if you want. The pagan community is filled with magickal chants to raise energy. If you ever visit public circles or check the ritual music sections of a witch shop, you might learn a few, such as the classic "We All Come From the Goddess." I think it's also fun to make your own. Let your magick inspire your music and your music inspire your magick.

RITUAL STORY AND DRAMA

Another exciting aspect of ritual is storytelling and drama. Just like singing, most guys think it's not manly, but many great heroes were also poets and bards. Most rituals are dramatic reenactments of sacred cycles of life. Later those rituals became entertainment. In ancient cultures such as Greece, theater retained many of its magickal associations. Only when magick was slowly weeded out did drama become something secular and only for entertainment.

When we cast a circle, we are moving clockwise, mimicking the movement of the Sun and life. When we reach up to the Moon in the Great Rite, we are ritually enacting the union of the earth and sky. When we plunge the athame into the chalice, we are symbol-

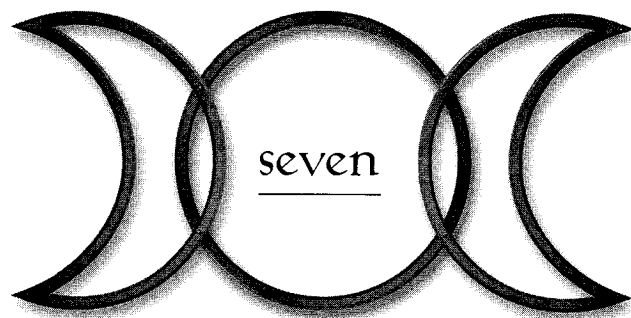
ically enacting the union of Goddess and God. All our spells and rituals are mini-dramas.

Before we had modern forms of entertainment, our entertainment was storytelling, song, and drama. Certain rituals were both entertaining and sacred. At particular times of the year, stories of great heroes and gods were retold. They had significance with the season and moon cycle, but they also taught the culture its history and morals. Each story was like a spell; it had meaning and intention behind it. Our stories remind us where we are from, and as a modern culture, our New Age is both a blessing and a potential curse. Through communication, we have more access to stories and myths across the globe, from every time and culture. But as a people, we are forgetting our important stories, focusing on many mindless dramas and losing sight of the magick of story.

In ritual, these traditional stories are often reenacted. A storyteller acts as narrator and various people act out the roles. Through this ritual, they get to see the world through the eyes of a god, goddess, or hero. This is the first step of magickal invocation: learning to merge and blend your consciousness with divine figures.

Try blending drama and storytelling into your rituals. You can simply read a story out loud as part of your ritual in order to connect with those figures and ask for guidance. If you seek, for example, to make a connection with a sea god to understand the element of water better—or simply improve your swimming—reading the sea god's story in ritual is a great way to form a bridge with that god. If you want growth in skill and power, read the story of the many-skilled Lugh as he leads the Tuatha Dé Danaan against the Formorians.

If you can work with a group of people, you can learn parts and act out the drama. Ritual drama is not like television or movies. It is not about being believable as an actor. Ritual drama is symbolic and exaggerated. It's more like playing pretend. It should be fun. Try working with the story of Horus if you want to incorporate story and drama into your work. It can have both male and female parts if you work in a group, and has action as well as magick, or you can read it as a part of your rituals, to connect with the powers of the Egyptian gods.



Spellcraft: The Tools of Life

Imagine yourself outside in a garden, under the moonlight, picking a special herb to be used in your potions. Imagine yourself in your magical laboratory, brewing elixirs and potions and writing spells in a big book. When I thought about witchcraft, I thought about the witches and wizards practicing their Craft. It seemed like great fun. And it is!

Most people jump right into doing spells without understanding the spirit of the witch—not a good idea. Now that we've taken the time to ask ourselves the hard questions, though, we can dive into the Craft of the witch responsibly. Spells are the tools for transforming our lives, both our inner lives and our outer lives. If you change your inner world for the better, your outer world has to change too.

WHAT ARE SPELLS?

A spell is an act of magick. Magick is energy. We can sense magick. We can sometimes see magick. We can live magick and ultimately be magick. But spells are specific acts of

magick—just like sound is all around us, but a song is an intentional gathering of sound. Magick is like the sounds all around us, and a spell is like a particular song. Both songs and spells take craftsmanship and a love of the work. Just as anyone can hum a tune, even if they think they can't really sing, anyone who really wants to can learn to use the power of magick.

A spell is a ritual, a magickal action that creates change. When you intend something and do a ritual to make that intention come true, you are doing a spell. You can intend—use your will—to create anything.

Usually the changes happen in a way that seems normal, but it is still magickal. You can do a spell to have more friends, and then you bump into someone in the library or at the mall and start talking. Soon you become friends and are introduced to a new group of people. Doesn't that seem magickal? No lightning bolts came from the sky or anything fancy, yet it happened soon after you asked for it in your spell. You can do a spell for a part-time job, and soon a friend tells you of a job opening, or you just have a feeling to go a certain store, and they hire you on the spot. Most magick works through simple channels, but you have to be aware enough to listen to your intuition and let it happen.

Nonmagickal people—whom some traditional witches call *cowans* (even though most witches now consider it out-of-date and impolite to use the word)—think magick is just coincidence. You might think it too. I thought my successful spells were coincidences. But spell after spell, I couldn't believe in that many coincidences. No one was that lucky. So my spells had to be working.

At first, I didn't truly believe in spells. I just did them with an open mind and trusted my experience. Witches will never ask you to believe something. We just ask you to have an open mind. If it doesn't work at first, keep at it. Spellworking is a skill. Just like any skill, you can get better with practice and more knowledge.

MAGICK IN THE REAL WORLD

Well, if you were expecting to be able to shoot balls of fire out of your hands or levitate three feet off the ground, this section will sound pretty boring. Many people have Hollywood expectations of magick after seeing too many unrealistic TV shows and movies. They expect the flash but don't see the substance. Witches are practical people. We don't waste energy. Why spend years trying to move a spoon across the table with only the

power of your mind and have little success when you can just get up and move the spoon? All that time could have been spent learning something else, having fun, working, or spending time with friends.

Our spells are practical spells. They use simple things, usually, and make the use of candles, symbols, and herbs into ritual. With magickal effort, we create a practical change in the world. We do spells for things we need and want. Though you can do a spell for anything as long as you don't harm anyone, including yourself, most witches are not frivolous or greedy. We ask for what we will use and seek to live in balance. As priests and priestesses, we don't take vows of poverty, but we don't seek out grand mansions either. We believe in comfort, health, and balance.

Being practical, our spells are followed up with something real. Don't expect to cast a successful job spell if you never fill out an application. Don't expect a spell for an A+ test to work if you never open a book. Witches follow up spells with real-world actions, believing the spells will guide them to the right place, person, or action. All you have to do is listen to your intuition. That is why we learn to meditate first. It helps us to quiet down and listen to intuition.

Our magick is often secret and subtle. No one needs to know. A wise witch will change himself before changing the world around him. We usually think we need to change other people, places, and situations, but most often, the easiest thing to do is to change ourselves.

Let's say one of your parents makes you angry because they always are asking you questions about where you are going and what you are doing. My dad did that all the time. He still does at times. My first reaction would be to do a spell to make him stop asking questions. Ethically, that's a gray area because you are trying to force another person's will. That's harmful. I wouldn't want that done to me. And if I wouldn't want it done to me, I wouldn't do it to anyone else. So if you are in this situation, you're out of luck, right? Not exactly. You can do a spell to let go of your anger. Now I can answer my dad's questions and not feel any resentment. I changed myself. Now I have more patience in other situations too.

Spells help us take responsibility for our lives. So many people feel helpless. They feel they are victims, and things happen to them. Witches know things happen for specific reasons. Everything is connected, even though we can't always see or understand the reason when it affects us. Often, we're too close to it. But we're not powerless. We can use

our magick to create better futures. If I feel stuck, I do a spell to move forward. If I'm sick, I do a spell to get better. We don't simply wish and wait for our dreams to come true. We make them happen through magick and action.

Using magick to fulfill our desires is actually very spiritual. Fulfilling our magickal desires proves to us that everything is connected through the web of life. Magick manifests in simple ways, through information and opportunities presented by others, to show how connected we are to all people. If you do a spell for a job, for instance, and someone tells you about an employment opportunity, then it shows you are connected to that person, and on some unconscious level, they heard your call to the universe and answered. Feeling connected to anything and everything is the heart of witchcraft. We are connected by perfect love and perfect trust.

FOLK MAGICK

Magick doesn't have to be complicated. It can be, and sometimes it's fun to use lots of stuff and make it complicated, but magick is the power of the universe. Spells can be simple and still be powerful. They don't have to be elaborate productions. Tools are helpful, and things like herbs, stones, and metals have energy that adds to the spell, but the most important energy is your own. All you really need is yourself. Your own body, will, heart, and mind are the four elements of magick. The tools simply help bring them out of you.

Though I love the magick circle from the last chapter and find it a powerful way to do spells, it's not the only way to do magick. Most forms of folk magick can be done in or out of a circle. I tend to do most of my spells in a magick circle because I like things complicated. My mother, on the other hand, a wise and talented witch, does little of her magick in a formal circle. She does lots of things in the kitchen. My partner is a writer, and he does much of his magick at his desk and computer. We each have to find ways to work magick that fit our lifestyles.

Folk magick is the simple, practical magick of the pagan people. The ideas behind folk magick work through the Principle of Correspondence. If you use items that have similar properties to what you want to accomplish and perform simple actions that mimic what you want to accomplish, you have a powerful magick ritual. If you want to create rain during a drought, for example, you can use water and pour it on the ground from a watering can, making a mini-rainstorm in the ritual. If you want to remove de-