

EXERCISES FROM SPIRAL DANCE by StarHawk

The following meditations and inductions are given as general directions, to be read carefully with attention to the rhythm of your voice and the timing of pauses. The only way to learn this is by practice. Read through the exercises, become familiar with them, and then improvise in your own natural speech patterns.

EXERCISE 3: SENSING GROUP ENERGY

"The energy we talk about in Witchcraft is real, a subtle force that we can all learn to perceive. Right now, as we are sitting in the circle, be aware of the energy level in the group. Do you feel alert? Aware? Excited? Calm or anxious? Tense, or relaxed? (Pause.) "Energy travels up and down your spine. Now sit up, as erect as you can without straining. Good. Notice how the energy level has changed. Do you feel more alert? More aware? Good. {Pause.} "Your breath moves energy in and out of your body. It awakens your body's centers of power. So take a deep breath. Breathe deep . . . breathe all the way down. Breathe from your diaphragm . . . from your belly . . . from your womb. Your stomach should push in and out as you breathe . . . loosen your pants if you need to. Fill your belly with breath. Feel yourself relaxing, recharging. Now notice how the energy of the group has changed. (Pause.) "Now let's reach out and take hands, linking ourselves together around the circle. Continue to breathe deeply. Feel the energy move around the circle. It may seem like a subtle tingling, or a low heat, or even a sensation of cold. We may all perceive it differently. Some of us may see it-dancing like sparks in the center of the circle. (Long pause.)

{To end here:} "Now take a deep breath, and suck in the power, as if you were sucking through a straw. Feel it travel down your spine, and flow into the earth. Relax."

(Or go on to the next exercise.)

EXERCISE 4: GROUP BREATH

(To begin here, say:) "Let's take hands around the circle and sit {or stand} up straight. "And now, closing your eyes, let's breathe together-breathing the deep breath of the belly, of the womb. Inhale. . .(slowly), exhale. . .inhale. . .exhale . . . inhale . . . exhale . . . feel yourself relax, as you breathe. Feel yourself become strong . . . with each breath . . . become refreshed . . . with each breath . . . feel your worries floating away . . . with each breath . . . become revitalized . . . as we breathe together . . . inhale . . . exhale . . . inhale . . . exhale . . . "And feel our breath as it meets in the center of the circle . . . as we breathe as one . . . breathing one breath . . . inhale . . . exhale . . . breathing one circle . . . breathing one, living organism . . . with each breath . . . becoming one circle . . . with each breath . . . becoming one . . ." (long pause).

(End as in Exercise 3, or go on.)

EXERCISE 5: THE TREE OF LIFE

(This is one of the most important meditations, which is practiced individually, as well as in the group. In solitary practice, begin by sitting or standing erect, and breathing deeply and rhythmically.)

"And as we breathe, remember to sit erect, and as your spine straightens, feel the energy rising . . . (pause). "Now imagine that your spine is the trunk of a tree. . .and from its base roots extend deep into the earth . . . into the center of the earth Herself . . . (pause). "And you can draw up power from the earth, with each breath . . . feel the energy rising . . . like sap rising through a tree trunk . . . "And feel the power rise up your spine . . . fee! yourself becoming more alive . . . with each breath . . . "And from the crown of your head, you have branches, that sweep up and back down to touch the earth . . . and feel the power burst from the crown of your head . . . and feel it sweep through the branches until it touches the earth again . . . making a circle . . . making a circuit . . . returning to its source . . . (In a group:) "And breathing deeply, feel how all our branches intertwine . . . and the power weaves through them . . . and dances among them, like the wind . . . feel it moving . . . ' (long pause).
(End as in Exercise 3, or go on.)

EXERCISE 6: POWER CHANT

(This should always begin with a Group Breath-Exercise 4.)

"Now let your breath become sound . . . any sound that you like . . . a moan . . . a sigh . . . a giggle . . . a low hum . . . a howl . . . a melody . . . chant the wordless sounds of the vowels . . ." (Wait. In a new group, there may be silence for a moment. Slowly, someone will begin to sigh, or hum very quietly. Others will gradually join in. The chant may develop into a strong hum, or a swelling wave of open-throated notes. People may begin to chortle, bark; or howl like animals, if they feel so inclined. The chant may peak suddenly, and drop to silence, or it may rise and fall in several tides of power. Let it direct itself. When everyone is silent, allow a quiet time of relaxation. Before the group has time to get restless, earth the power as in Exercise 7.)

EXERCISE 7: EARTHING POWER

(Also called grounding, earthing power is one of the basic techniques of magic. Power must be earthed every time it is raised. Otherwise, the force we feel as vitalizing energy degenerates into nervous tension and irritability. In the earlier exercises, we grounded the energy by sucking it in and letting it flow through us into the earth. That technique is often useful when working alone.) "Now sink to the ground and relax. Place your palms flat on the ground, or lie flat. Let the power sink into the earth where it will be cleansed and renewed. Relax, center, and be at peace.

EXERCISE 8: WORD ASSOCIATION TRANCE

Begin with group breath, sitting in a circle with subdued lights. Whenever anyone relaxed and comfortable, begin.

"Now we're going to go around the circle, clockwise. I'll start by saying a word, and the next person will say the first word that pops into her mind. Then the person after that will respond to her word, and so on, around the circle. Don't think about the word, just relax, breathe deep, and let it come."

(S t a r t . T h e s e q u e n c e m i g h t g o l i k e t h i s :)
"Green/Pea/Soup/Hot/Cold/Ice/Snow/White/Black/Bird/Fly/Sky/Starry/ Night/Dark." {After a few

rounds:) "Now we're each going to repeat the last person's word before we add our own." (The sequence might go like this:) "Dark Cave/Cave Bury/Bury Deep/Deep Sea/Sea Wave/Wave Flag/Flag Star/Star Light/Light Ray/Ray Sun." (After a few rounds:)

"Now we're each going to repeat the last two words before adding our own."

(Now the sequence might run like this:)

"Ray Sun Shine/Sun Shine Day/Shine Day Forever/Day Forever Night/ Forever Night Sky/Night Sky Star/Sky Star Light. " ' (This is an actual invocation we use, which was created by a group during this exercise. As the trance continues, words become entities in themselves. The combinations form constantly shifting scenes, which flash vividly before the inner eye. Gradually, the cycle may die away, and people simply describe what they - see:)

"I see a dark sky, dotted with a million stars--one of them shoots across the sky, "I see a blazing comet, with a golden tail trailing behind . . . '

"I see a trailing peacock's tail with iridescent eyes . . . "

"I see an eye looking at me . . . '

"I see a face, the dark face of a beautiful woman . . . "

(Descriptions may be elaborate or simple. Some may obtain striking visions, others hear sounds or voices, or feel new sensations. A few people may drift off to sleep. After a time, the group will fall silent, each member floating in her own vision. Allow time for everyone to fully experience her inner world, then say:) "Now breathe deeply and say farewell to your visions. In a moment, we're going to open our eyes and awaken, fully and completely, feeling refreshed and renewed. When I count to three, we will open our eyes and wake up. Now take a deep breath . . . inhale . . . exhale . . . one . . . two . . . three. . . . Open your eyes, ice and awaken, refreshed and renewed."

It is extremely important to bring everyone fully back into ordinary consciousness. Turn on the lights and change the atmosphere completely. Share food and drink (but not alcohol); move around and talk. Otherwise, participants may remain slightly entranced, a condition that becomes draining and depressing.

This is especially good for opening up the creative imagination and could be used in art or writing classes as well as in covens.

Ritual is partly a matter of performance, of theater. Some people delight in this aspect of Witchcraft; others become shy and frozen in front of a group. The quieter coveners, however, may channel power in other ways. Brook, for example, rarely wants to cast the circle or invoke the Goddess, but when she chants, her voice, ordinarily pleasant but unremarkable, becomes an eerie, more-than-human channel for power.

Magical training varies greatly from coven to coven, but its purpose is always the same: to open up the starlight consciousness, the other-way-of-knowing that belongs to the right hemisphere and allows us to make contact with the Divine within. The beginner must develop four basic abilities: relaxation, concentration, visualization, and projection.

Relaxation is important because any form of tension blocks energy.

Muscular tension is felt as mental and emotional stress, and emotional stresses cause physical and muscular tension and dr5-ease. Power trying

to move through a tense body is like an electric current trying to force its way through a line of

resistors. Most of the juice is lost along the way. Physical relaxation also seems to change brain wave patterns and activate centers that aren't ordinarily used.

EXERCISE 9: RELAXATION

(This can be done in a group, alone, or with a partner. Begin by lying down on your back. Do not cross your limbs. Loosen any tight clothing.) "In order to know how relaxation feels, we must first experience tension. We are going to tense all the muscles of the body, one by one, and keep them tense until we relax our entire bodies with one breath. Don't clench the muscles so they cramp, just tense them lightly. "Start with your toes. Tense the toes in your right foot . . . and now your left foot. Tense your right foot . . . and your left foot. Your right ankle . . . and your left ankle. . . . (Continue throughout the whole body, part by part. From time to time, remind the group to tense any muscles that they have let slack.) "Now tense your scalp. Your whole body is tense. . . feel the tension in every part. Tense any muscles that have gone slack. Now take a deep breath . . . inhale . . . (pause) . . . exhale . . . and relax!" "Relax completely. You are completely and totally relaxed." (In a sing-song tone:) "Your fingers are relaxed, and your toes are relaxed. Your hands are relaxed, and your feet are relaxed. Your wrists are relaxed, and your ankles are relaxed." (And so on, throughout the entire body. Periodically pause and say:) "You are completely and totally relaxed. Completely and totally relaxed. Your body is light, it feels like water, like it is melting into the earth." and "Allow yourself to drift and float peacefully in your state of relaxation. If any worries or anxieties disturb your peace, imagine they drain from your body like water and melt into the earth. Feel yourself being healed and renewed." (Remain in deep relaxation for ten to fifteen minutes. It is good to practice this exercise daily, until you can relax completely simply by lying down and letting go, without needing to go through the entire process. People who have difficulty sleeping will find this extremely helpful. However, do not allow yourself to drift off into sleep. You are training your mind to remain in a relaxed but alert state. Later, you will use this state for trance work, which will be much more difficult if you are not in the habit of staying awake. If you practice this at night before sleeping, sit up, open your eyes and consciously end the exercise before dozing.

Many of the other exercises can be most effectively practiced in a state of deep relaxation. Experiment to find what works best for you.) Visualization is the ability to see, hear, feel, touch, and taste with the inner senses. Our physical eyes do not see, they merely transmit nerve impulses touched off by light stimuli to the brain. It is the brain that sees, and it can see inner images as clearly as those in the outer world. In dreams, all five senses are vivid. With practice, most people can develop the ability to use the inner senses vividly while awake. Some people naturally see images, others may hear or feel impressions.

A few people find it difficult or impossible to visualize, but most find the facility will improve with exercise. Visualization is important because it is through internal images and sensations that we communicate with Younger Self and the High Self.

When the inner senses are fully awake, we may see visions of extraordinary beauty, smell the blossoms of the Isle of Apples, taste ambrosia, and hear the songs of the Gods.

EXERCISE 10: GROUNDING AND CENTERING

Before beginning visualization practice, we should ground and center ourselves. This is again one

of the basic techniques of magical work. Grounding means to establish an energy connection with the earth. The Tree of Life exercise is one method of grounding. Another is to visualize a cord or pole extending from the base of your spine into the center of the earth. Center yourself by aligning your body along its center of gravity. Breathe from your center-from your diaphragm and abdomen. Feel energy flow up from the earth and fill you. Grounding is important because it allows you to draw on the earth's vitality, rather than depleting your own. When channeling energy, it serves as a psychic lightning rod-forces run through you into the earth, rather than "burning out" your mind and body.

EXERCISE 11: SIMPLE VISUALIZATIONS:

This exercise is for those of you who have difficulty visualizing. Ground center. Close your eyes, and imagine that you are looking at a white wall or a blank screen. Practice visualizing simple geometric forms: a line, a dot, a circle triangle, an ellipse, and so on.

When you are able to see the forms clearly, visualize the screen in color: red, yellow, blue, orange, green, violet, and black in turn. It may help to look at a colored object with your eyes open, first-then close your eyes and mentally see the color.

Finally, practice visualizing the geometric forms in various colors. Change the colors and forms until you can mentally picture them at will.

EXERCISE 12: THE APPLE

Visualize an apple. Hold it in your hands; turn it around; feel it. Feel the shape, the size, the weight, the texture. Notice the color, the reflection of light on its skin. Bring it up to your nose and smell it. Bite into it, taste it; hear the crunch as your teeth sink in. Eat the apple; feel it slide down your throat. See it grow smaller. When you have eaten it down to the core, let it disappear.

Repeat with other foods. Ice cream cones are also excellent subjects.

EXERCISE 13: THE PENTACLE

Visualize a line of flickering blue flame, like a gas flame from a Bunsen burner. Now mentally draw a pentacle, a five-pointed star with one point up, in the invoking direction: starting at the top and moving down to the left. Watch it form out of the blue flame. Hold the image in your mind for a few moments.

Now retrace it in the banishing direction, starting at the lower left-hand corner and moving up. As you do so, watch it disappear.

Practice until it comes to you easily. This visualization is part of casting circle.

EXERCISE 14: THE KNOT

Visualize yourself tying a knot-any knot you can tie easily in reality. Try not to see a mental picture of yourself from outside; instead, put yourself in the picture. See your hands moving, and feel the string. Feel every movement you would make, then draw the knot closed, and feel the string pull taut.

This visualization is used to bind spells.

More complex visualizations are given in later chapters.

Concentration is the ability to focus on an image, thought, or task, to narrow one's field of awareness and shut out distractions. Like a muscle, it grows stronger with exercise.

INVOKING PENTACLE

BANISHING PENTACLE

Start

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Start

Many people today practice forms of Eastern meditation-yoga, Zen, Transcendental Meditation-which are excellent for developing concentration. The more you practice the visualizations, the easier it is to concentrate on the images. The following three exercises will help improve your inner focus:

EXERCISE 15: CANDLE GAZING

In a quiet, darkened room, light a candle. Ground and center, and gaze quietly at the candle. Breathe deeply, and let yourself feel warmed by the light of the candle. Let its peaceful radiance fill you completely. As thoughts surface in your mind, experience them as if they came from outside. Do not let the flame split into a double image: keep your eyes focused. Remain for at least five or ten minutes, then relax.

EXERCISE 16: THE DIAMOND

Again, light a candle in a dim quiet room. Ground and center. Gaze at the candle and visualize a diamond in the center of your forehead, between and just above your eyebrows. The diamond reflects the light of the candle, and the candle reflects the light of the diamond. Feel the reverberation of energy. Hold for at least five or ten minutes, then relax.

EXERCISE 17: MIRROR, MIRROR

Ground and center. In a mirror, gaze into your own eyes. Focus your attention on the space between them. Repeat your own name to yourself, over and over. Again, as thoughts surface, experience them as if they were outside you. After five or ten minutes, relax. Projection is the ability

to send out energy. It comes quite naturally to most people, once they are aware of its feel. Projection, is also used in another sense to mean the ability to travel out-of-body.

EXERCISE 18: THE ROCK

Ground and center. Imagine that you are standing on the seashore, looking out over the waves. In your strongest hand, you hold a heavy rock. Pick it up, inhale, and as you exhale, let it fly! Watch it splash into the sea just below the horizon. Now look up again. Realize that you can see a horizon twice as far away. Mentally stretch to see it. In your hand, you hold a rock twice as large as the first. Again, take a deep breath, and, as you exhale, throw with all your might. Watch it splash into the far waves. Once again, look up and realize that you can see a horizon twice as far away again. In your hand, you hold a rock twice as heavy. Take one more deep breath, and as you exhale, throw hard! Watch it splash. Practice this exercise until you can feel the release of power that goes with the rock.

EXERCISE 19: THE HAMMER

Ground and center. Visualize a heavy hammer in your hand. A stubborn nail is sticking out of a board in front of you. With all your strength, drive the nail into the board. Repeat, doing it three times in all.

Covens have many different ways of taking on new members. Some hold open classes or study groups. We prefer to have initiates take on individual apprentices. Each newcomer gets individualized instruction, tailored to her particular needs. And each coven member has a chance to be an authority, and is forced to conceptualize her own knowledge of the Craft.

EXERCISE 20: SALT-WATER PURIFICATION

(This is one of the basic individual meditations that should be practiced regularly. During periods of high anxiety or depression or when undertaking heavy responsibilities, it is helpful to practice this daily.) Fill a cup with water. (Use your ritual chalice, if you have one. With your athame (or other implement), add three mounds of salt, and stir counterclockwise. Sit with the cup in your lap. Let your fears, worries, doubts, hatreds, and disappointments surface in your mind. See them as a black stream, which flows out of you as you breathe and is dissolved by the salt water in the cup. Allow yourself time to feel deeply cleansed. Now hold up the cup. Breathe deeply, and feel yourself drawing up power from the earth (as in the Tree of Life exercise.) Let the power flow into the salt water, until you can visualize it glowing with white light. Sip the water. As you feel it on your tongue, know that you have taken in the Power of cleansing, of healing. Fear and unhappiness have become transformed into the power of change. Empty the leftover water into a running stream. (Alas, in these decadent times the nearest stream is usually running out of the kitchen faucet and down the drain.)

EXERCISE 21: GROUP SALT-WATER PURIFICATION

Coveners assemble in a circle, with incense and point candles lit. The High Priestess goes to the altar, grounds and centers herself. She takes the eup of water in her right hand, saying "Blessed be thou creature of water." She takes the dish of salt in her left hand, and says, "Blessed be, thou creature of earth." Both up to the sky with arms outstretched, and lets power flow into them say;

Salt and water,
Inner and outer,
Soul and body,
Be cleansed!
Cast out all that is harmful!

Take in all that is good and healing!
By the power of the Mother of all life,
And her lover the Horned God,
So mote* it be!"

She sets them down on the altar, and takes her Athame in her stronge;
saying, "Blessed be, thou creature of art." She spills three mounds of salt water and stirs it counterclockwise, saying,

May this athame be purified,
And may these tools and this altar be purified,
as she shakes a few drops over the altar, then salutes sky and earth:

"In the names of (.ife and Death, so mote* it be!"

She then holds the cup to her heart and charges the water with power
she can feel it glowing, she returns to the circle. The cup is sent around, each person performs her or his private purification. Others may sing softly as the goes around. In a large group, three or four cups of water are charged at the same time; otherwise the cup may take hours to go around the circle.
When the cup returns to the High Priestess, she sends a kiss around the circle. Then she begins the casting of the circle.

EXERCISE 22: BANISHING

After the purification, the High Priestess takes the sword or athame an to the center of the circle. She points the blade to earth and sky, anc forcefully,

Spirits of evil,
Unfriendly beings,
Unwanted guests,
Begone!

Leave us, leave this place, leave this circle,
That the Gods may enter.
Go, or be cast into the outer darkness!
Go, or be drowned in the watery abyss!
Go, or be burned in the flames!
Go, or be torn by the whirlwind!
By the power of the Mother and the Horned One,

[Salt and water are both cleansing elements. Water, of course, washes clean. Salt preserves from decay and is a natural disinfectant. The ocean the womb of life, is salt water, and so are tears, which help us purify the heart of sorrow.]

Objects can become reservoirs of psychic power, which may be dissipated by, for example, slicing fruit with your athame. Kitchen Witches, on the other hand, feel that the Goddess is manifest in ordinary tasks as well as magic circles. When you slice fruit with your athame, you consecrate the fruit, and a kitchen chore becomes a sacred task. Whichever school of thought you follow, it is a breach of manners to handle another Witch's tools without asking permission.

Tools may be bought, hand-made yourself, given as gifts, or found , sometimes in unusual circumstances. A set of tools are sometimes given to a new initiate by the coven. When buying magical tools, never haggle over the price. Correspondences may differ in varying traditions, and interpretations of symbolism may not always agree. The following are the correspondences used in the Faery Tradition

The East

The East corresponds to the element Air, to the mind, dawn, spring, to pale, airy colors, yellow and violet, to the eagle and high-flying birds, and the power to know. Its tools are the athame and the sword, which are used interchangeably. The athame is traditionally a double-bladed, black- handled knife, but people use anything from kitchen knives to Swiss Army knives complete with corkscrew, so indispensable for opening ritual wine. Many Witches do not own a sword; they are dramatic at large, open rituals but awkward in close quarters.

EXERCISE 23: AIR MEDITATION

Face East. Ground and center. Breathe deep, and be conscious of the air as it flows in and out of your lungs. Feel it as the breath of the Goddess, and take in the life force, the inspiration, of the universe. Let your own breath merge with the winds, the clouds, the great currents that sweep over land and ocean with the turning of the earth. Say, "Hail, Araida, Bright Lady of the Air!"

EXERCISE 24: ATHAME OR SWORD MEDITATION

Ground and center. Hold your athame or sword in your strongest hand. Breathe deeply and take in the power of Air, the power of the mind. The power of this tool is that of discrimination, of drawing lines, setting limits, making choices, and carrying them out. Remember choices you have made and carried through in spite of difficulties. Feel the power of your mind to influence others and the strength of your responsibility not to misuse that power.

You have the force to act ethically, in accord with what you believe is right. Let the power of your intelligence, your knowledge, your moral courage, flow into your tool.

The South

The South corresponds to the element Fire, to energy or spirit, to noon, summer, fiery reds and oranges, to the solar lion and the quality of will. Its tool is the wand, which may be a slender branch of hazel, a stout oak staff, or a magically shaped piece of driftwood. The wand is used to channel energy, to direct a cone of power, and to invoke God or Goddess.

EXERCISE 25: FIRE MEDITATION

Face South. Ground and center. Be conscious of the electric spark within each nerve as pulses jump from synapse to synapse. Be aware of the combustion within each cell, as food burns to release energy. Let your own fire become one with candle flame, bonfire, hearth fire, lightning, starlight, and sunlight, one with the bright spirit of the Goddess. Say, "Hail, Tana, Goddess of Fire!"

EXERCISE 26: WAND MEDITATION

Ground and center. Hold your wand in your strongest hand. Breathe deeply, and feel the power of Fire, of energy. Be aware of yourself as a channel of energy. You can change spirit into matter, idea to reality, concept into form. Feel your own power to create, to do, to be an agent of change. Be in touch with your will—your power to do what you must, to set a goal and work toward it. Let your will flow into your wand.

The West corresponds to the element Water, to emotions, to twilight, autumn, to blues, grays, deep purples, and sea greens, to sea serpents, dolphins, fish, to the power to dare. From the West comes the courage to face our deepest feelings. Its tool is the cup or chalice, which holds the salt water or wine.

EXERCISE 27: WATER MEDITATION

Face to the West. Ground and center. Feel the blood flowing through the rivers of your veins, the liquid tides within each cell of the body. You are fluid, one drop congealed out of the primal ocean which is the womb of the Great Mother. Find the calm pools of tranquility within you, the rivers of feeling, the tides of power. Sink deep into the well of the inner mind, below consciousness. Say, "Hail, Tiamat, Serpent of the Watery Abyss!"

EXERCISE 28: CUP MEDITATION

Ground and center. Hold your cup cradled in both hands. Breathe deep, and feel the power of Water, of feeling and emotion. Be in touch with the flow of your own emotions: love, anger, sorrow, joy. The cup is the symbol of nurturing, the overflowing breast of the Goddess that nourishes all life. Be aware of how you are nurtured, of how you nurture others. The power to feel is the power to be human to be real, to be whole. Let the strength of your emotions flood the cup.

The North

The North is considered the most powerful direction. Because the sun never reaches the north, it is the direction of Mystery, of the unseen. The North Star is the center, around which the skies revolve. Altars face North in the Craft. North corresponds to Earth, to the body, to midnight, winter, brown, black and the green of vegetation. From the North comes the power to keep silent, to listen as well as speak, to keep secrets, to know what not to say. The Goddess as Dark Maiden, the new moon that is not yet visible, and the God as Sacred Bull, are the totems of the North, and its tool is the pentacle, the prime symbol of the Craft. A five-pointed star with one point up, set within the circle of the full moon, the pentacle can be engraved on a plate, glazed on a ceramic platter, or molded out of "baker's clay"-bread dough and salt. It is used for grounding energy or as a platter for serving the sacred cakes.

EXERCISE 29: EARTH MEDITATION

Face North. Ground and center. Feel your bones, your skeleton, the solidity of your body. Be aware of your flesh, of all that can be touched and felt. Feel the pull of gravity, your own weight, your attraction to the earth that is the body of the Goddess. You are a natural feature, a moving mountain. Merge with all that comes from the earth: grass, trees, grains, fruits, flowers, beasts, metals and precious stones. Return to dust, to compost, to mud. Say, "Hail, Belili Mother of Mountains!"

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EXERCISE 30: THE PENTACLE Meditation-THE FIVE STAGES OF LIFE

Ground and center. Hold your pentacle in both hands. Breathe deep, and feel the power of earth, of the body. The pentacle is your own body, four limbs and head. It is the five senses, both inner and outer. Be in touch with your own power to see, to hear, to smell, to taste, to touch. The pentacle is the four elements plus the fifth-essence. And it is the five stages of life, each an aspect of the Goddess:

1. Birth: the beginning, the time of coming into being
2. Initiation: adolescence, the time of individuation
3. Love: the time of union with another, of full adulthood, sexuality, responsibility
4. Repose: the time of advancing age, of reflection, integration, wisdom
5. Death: the time of ending, of letting go, of moving on toward rebirth

Look at your pentacle, or draw one on a sheet of paper. Label the five stations, going clockwise around the points, and experience each stage in turn, as it occurs in a lifetime span and within the span of

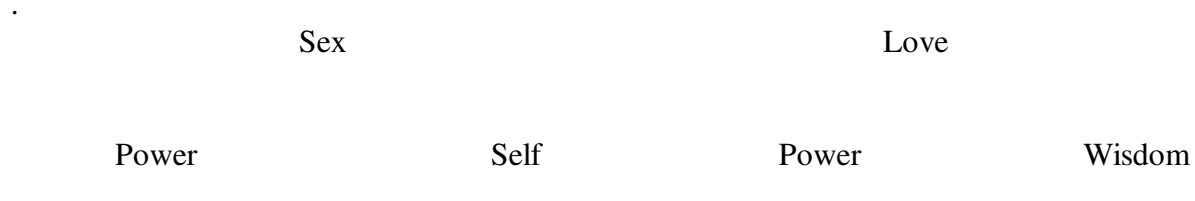
each new activity or relationship. Trace the interlocking lines and reflect on their meanings. Love is linked to Birth and Death. Death is linked to Love and Initiation. In the Goidelic¹ tree alphabet, each of the five stages was symbolized by a tree, whose name began with one of the five vowels:

- A: Birth-ailm, silver fir
- O: Initiation-onn, gorse or furze
- U. Love- ura, heather
- E.- Repose-eadha, the aspen
- I Death-idho, the yew

Chant the sounds of the vowels and feel the power of each stage in turn. Touch your pentacle to your body, and let the life force of your own flesh flow into

EXERCISE 31: THE IRON PENTAGRAM

(A pentagram is a drawn or written pentacle. This is a meditative tool of the Faery Tradition and an important training exercise.) Ground and center. In your Book of Shadows, draw a pentacle with interlock-g lines and label the points, in order, clockwise "Sex," "Self," "Passion," "Pride," and "Power." Sex is the manifestation of the driving life force energy of the universe. It is polarity, the attraction of God and Goddess, the on-off pulse that sustains universe, the orgasmic, ecstatic harmony that sings within each being. Self is identity, individuality. Each of us is a unique manifestation of the Goddess, and that individuality is highly valued in the Craft. Self-love is the foundation of all love. "Celebrate yourself, and you will see that Self is everywhere." Passion is the force of emotion that gives color and depth and vitality to life; Joy, sorrow, ecstasy, anger, fear, pain, love-the Goddess manifests in all human emotions. We cannot feel any of them in their full intensity unless we are willing to face them all. Pride encourages us to create, to do, to share, to grow, and to enjoy the rightful fruits of our achievements. True pride is not based on comparisons or competition, it is an absolute sense of one's inner worth. Pride carries with it the responsibility of acting in accordance with one's self-respect and respect for Self in others. Power is energy, inner power, not power over others. When the five points are in balance, the life force flows freely, filling us with vitality. Power is integrity, creativity, courage: the mark of a person who is whole. Meditate on each of the points in turn, and then explore the links and connections: "Sex-Passion," "Self-Pride," "Passion-Power," and so on. Lie down with your arms and legs outstretched so that you form a star. Let your head and each of your limbs be a point on the pentacle. When you are "on the points," they will all be in balance. If some points feel weak, work on developing those qualities. Absorb the strength of the Iron Pentagram



¹. Goidelic refers to the Gaelic Celts (Irish, Scots, Manx) as opposed to the Brythonic Celts (Welsh, Cornish and Bretons).

Pride Passion

Law

Knowledge

Birth

Death

Initiation

Repose

Consummation

EXERCISE 32: THE PENTAGRAM OF PEARL

The Pentagram of Pearl is a meditative tool, like the Iron Pentagram. Its points are Love, Wisdom, Knowledge, Law, and Power. Begin as for the Iron Pentagram. Love is the moving energy of life. It is both blindly erotic and deeply personal, a passionate, prideful, powerful caring for oneself and others. It is the law of the Goddess and the essence of magic. Wisdom and Knowledge can best be understood together. Knowledge is learning, the power of the mind to understand and describe the universe. Wisdom is knowing how to apply knowledge-and how not to apply it. Knowledge is knowing what to say; wisdom is knowing whether or not to say it.

Knowledge gives answers; wisdom asks questions. Knowledge can be taught; wisdom grows out of experience, out of making mistakes. Law is natural law, not human law. When we break natural laws, we suffer the consequences as a natural result of our actions, not as a punishment. If you break the law of gravity, you will fall. Magic functions within natural law, not outside of it. But natural law may be broader and more complex than we realize. Power, again, is the power that comes from within, when love, knowledge, wisdom and law are united. Power, rooted in love and tempered by knowledge, law, and wisdom, brings growth and healing. Again, meditate on the points and the links between them. Lie in the pentacle position, feel the points as part of yourself, and become aware of your own imbalances. Absorb the beauty of the Pentagram of Pearl. Center The center of the circle is the point of transformation. It corresponds to pure essence, to timelessness, to transparent light, to the power to go , to move, change, transform. Its magical tool is the cauldron, which may be the traditional three-legged cast iron pot, or a clay or metal bowl. The cauldron holds fire: a candle, incense, smoldering herbs, or a bonfire. It may also be a cooking pot, in which fire transforms the food we will eat.

EXERCISE 33: TRANSFORMATION MEDITATION

Ground and center. Whisper softly, over and over, "She changes everything She touches and everything She touches, changes." Feel the constant processes of , change within yourself, in your body, your ideas and emotions, your work and relationships. Within every unmoving stone, atoms are in constant flux. Feel the changes all around you, changes you have made, are about to make. Even ending the meditation is part of the process of change that is life. Say, "Hail, Kore, whose name cannot be spoken, the Ever-Changing One!"

EXERCISE 34: CAULDRON MEDITATION

Ground and center. Hold the cauldron in both hands. Breathe deep, and feel the power of transformation. You hold the Cauldron of Ceridwen, where the dead come to life. You hold the cauldron in which was brewed the broth that imparts all knowledge and understanding. The cauldron is the womb of the Goddess, the gestation ground of all birth. Think of the transformations you undergo every day. In a moment, you die and are reborn a thousand times. Feel your power to end and begin anew, your ability to gestate, to create, to give birth to new things, and let that power flow

into your cauldron.

Meditations on the elements are part of the training of every Witch. After experiencing the energy of each magical element separately, the apprentice is taught to combine them, in preparation for learning to cast a circle.

EXERCISE 35: THE CIRCLE VISUALIZATION EXERCISE

(You may lie down, sit comfortably, or get up and enact this exercise. Face each direction either physically or mentally.)

Ground and center. Face East. Visualize your athame in your strongest hand, and draw an Invoking Pentacle. See it burning with a pale, blue flame. Say, "Hail, Guardians of the Watchtowers of the East, Powers of Air. "

Walk through the pentacle, and see a great wind sweeping across a vast plain of waving grass. Breathe deeply, and feel the air on your face, in your lungs, through your hair. The sun is rising, and in its rays a golden eagle shines as it flies toward you. When you are filled with the power of air, say, "Hail and farewell, Shining Ones." Walk back through the pentacle.

Turn and face the South. Again, draw the Invoking Pentacle. Say, "Hail , Guardians of the Watchtowers of the South, Powers of Fire."

Walk through the pentacle. You are on a blazing veldt under the hot sun. It is high noon. Feel the sun's fire on your skin and absorb its power. In the distance, red-gold lions sun themselves. When you feel attuned to fire, say, "Hail and farewell, Radiant Ones." Walk back through the pentacle.

Turn and face the West, and again draw the pentacle. Say, "Hail, Guardians of the Watchtowers of the West, Powers of Water."

Walk through the pentacle. You are on a cliff above a pounding sea. Feel the spray and the force of the waves. It is twilight, and the blue-green waves are edged with violet as the sun disappears. Dolphins and sea serpents dive and play in the foam. When you feel attuned to the power of water, say, "Hail and farewell, Flowing Ones" and walk through the pentacle.

Turn and face North. Draw the pentacle, and say, "Hail, Guardians of the Watchtowers of the North, Powers of Earth."

Walk through the pentacle. You are in the midst of a lush, fertile landscape, on the slopes of a mountain. Around you are green, growing herbs nourished by fresh springs, and tall silent trees fed by the minerals and nutrients in the earth. In the distance, grain is waving in the fertile fields. Wild goats cling to the craggy heights above you, while below, herds of wild cattle thunder across the plain. It is midnight; the moon is hidden but the stars are bright. The Great Bear and Little Bear circle the North Star, the still center point of the whirling wheel of the sky. Say, "Hail and farewell, Silent Ones"

Visualize all four pentacles around you in a circle of blue flame. Above your head is an eight-rayed star. Breathe deep, and draw in power from the star. Let it fill you; feel it flood every cell of your body with light, a cone of light that extends deep into the earth around you. Thank the star, and let the light return to its source. Open the circle by visualizing the pentacles flying off into space.

Additional tools used in most covens include a cord, a necklace, a censer, and a Book of Shadows, which has been discussed in Chapter Three. The cord is the symbol of binding, of belonging to a particular coven. In some traditions, the color of the cord reflects the degree of advancement in the Craft of its bearer. The censer is used to hold the incense, and is identified with either the East or the South, Air or Fire. The necklace is the circle of rebirth, the sign of the Goddess. It can be of any design that is personally pleasing.

Of course, candles, herbs, oils, and incenses are also used in Witch-craft. Unfortunately, I don't have space to go into a detailed discussion of their uses and correspondences, especially as that information is given elsewhere, and is available from other sources. In general, a Witch depends less on traditional associations of herbs, odors, and colors than on her own intuition. If the "proper" materials aren't available, we improvise.

The tools are usually kept on an altar, which may be anything from a hand-carved antique chest to a box covered with a cloth. When used for regular meditation and magical practice, the altar becomes charged with energy, a vortex of power. Generally, a Witch's altar faces north, and the tools are placed in their corresponding directions. Images of the Goddess and God-statues, shells, seeds, flowers, or a mirror-take a central position.

EXERCISE 36: CONSECRATING A TOOL

(Tools can be charged-imbued with psychic energy-and consecrated with-in a group ritual, during an initiation, or individually. I will describe the rite for an athame: for other tools, simply make the necessary adjustments.)

Set up the altar as you want it, and light the candles and incense. Perform the Salt-Water Purification, and cast a circle by doing the Circle Visualization. Ask the Goddess to be with you.

Hold your athame in your strongest hand, saying "Blessed be, thou creature of art. ' Do the Athame or Sword Meditation.

Touch it to the symbols of each of the four elements in turn: incense for Air, the wand for Fire, the cup for Water, and the pentacle for Earth. Meditate on the power of each element, and visualize that power flowing into the athame. Say:

`May you be charged with the power of (Air, Fire, etc.) and serve me well in the (East, South, etc.), between the worlds, in all the worlds. So mote it be.

Pass your athame through the candle flame, and touch it to the central cauldron. Visualize white light filling and charging it. Say "May you be charged from the center of all, above and below, throughout and about, within and without , to serve me well between the worlds, in ail the worlds. So mote it be."

Draw or inscribe your own personal symbols on the blade or hilt. Trace over them with your own saliva, sweat, menstrual blood, or other secretions, to create the link with your tool. Breathe on it,

and imagine our own personal power flowing into it. Touch it to your heart, and your lips. Raise it to sky, and point it to earth. Wrap your cord around it (or imagine it, if you don't have a cord) and visualize a shield of light binding the power. Say "Cord go round, power be bound, light revealed, now be sealed."

Earth the power, thank the Goddess, and open the circle by thanking each of the directions and visualizing the pentacles dissolving.

In casting a circle, the outer forms used are less important than the strength of the inner visualization. When the High Priestess calls the Guardians of the East, for example, she feels the wind and sees the sun rising with her inner sight. She is also visualizing the flaming pentacles and the circle of light surrounding the coven. In a strong coven, one person may perform the outward actions, but all will be internally visualizing the circle and attuning themselves to the elements.

The outer forms can be very simple. Alone, it may be enough to simply visualize a ring of white light around the room, or turn to each direction in turn and tap the wall. A group may join hands and picture the circle, or one member may walk around the others. The circle may be marked out ahead of time with chalk, stones, string, flowers, leaves, or shells, or drawn invisibly with the athame as it is cast.

This chapter opens with a description of a formal circle casting. At first, trying to remember the words and actions, visualize the elements, and feel the power will be far more difficult than trying to pat your head and rub your stomach at the same time. But with practice your concentration will improve.

The energy field created by a circle can also be used for protection This can be done very simply:

EXERCISE 37: PROTECTIVE CIRCLE

Visualize a circle or bubble of white light around yourself, with the energy running clockwise. Tell yourself it is an impenetrable barrier no harmful forces can cross. If you have time, perform the Circle Visualization or quickly call each of the four elements in turn.

EXERCISE 38: PERMANENT PROTECTIVE CIRCLE

(A permanent circle of protection can be established around your home or place of work. The following ritual can be done alone, or in a group with each person carrying one of the objects.)

Ground and center. Go around the house widdershins with a bell, a broom and charged salt water. Ring the bell to scare away negative energies. Sweep away unwanted forces with the broom-or use a wand to wave them out. Sprinkle each entrance-each window, door, mirror, and major water outlets, with salt water. Also sprinkle the corners of every room. If necessary, perform a Banishing as in Exercise 22. Do the Salt-Water Purification.

Now go around the house clockwise, with salt water, athame, and incense Draw an invoking pentacle at each entrance with the athame, and then with salt water. Concentrate on forming a seal of protection that cannot be broken. Finally with the incense, charge each entrance and corner,

inviting good forces to enter Say,

Salt and sea,
OF ill stay free,
Fire and air,
Draw all that is fair.
Around and around,
The circle is bound.

Formally cast a circle in the room you will use for rituals. Chant and raise power to fill the house with protection. Then thank the Goddess, earth the power and open the circle.

You can reinforce a protective circle by visualizing it. Do so before magical work or sleep.

The circle is cast; the ritual is begun. We have created the sacred space, a space fit for the Gods to enter. We have cleansed ourselves and centered ourselves; our mental bonds have dropped away. Free from fear, we can open to the starlight. In perfect Love and perfect trust we are prepared to invoke the Gods

The Goddess is first of all earth, the dark, nurturing mother Who brings forth all life. She is the power of fertility and generation; the womb , and also the receptive tomb, the power of death. All proceeds from Her ã all returns to Her. As earth, She is also plant life; trees, the herbs and grains ~ that sustain life. She is in the stars, the ocean, the earth, through trees, animals, through other human beings, through ourselves. She is here. She is within us all. She is the circle: earth, air, fire, water, and essence-body, mind, spirit, emotions; change. She is the body, and the body is sacred. Womb, breast, belly, mouth, vagina, penis, bone, and blood-no part of the body is 'unclean, no aspect of the life processes is stained by any concept of sin. Birth, death, and decay are equally sacred parts of the cycle. Whether we are eating, sleeping, making love, or eliminating body wastes, we are manifesting the Goddess.

The Earth Goddess is also air and sky, the celestial Queen of Heaven, ã the Star Goddess, ruler of things felt but not seen: of knowledge, mind, and intuition. She is the Muse, who awakens all creations of the human spirit. She is the cosmic lover, the morning and evening star, Venus, who appears at the times of love-making. Beautiful and glittering, She can never be grasped or penetrated; the mind is drawn ever further in the drive to know the unknowable, to speak the inexpressible. She is the inspiration that comes with an indrawn breath.

The celestial Goddess is seen as the moon, who is linked to women's monthly cycles of bleeding and fertility. Woman is the earthly moon; the moon is the celestial egg, drifting in the sky womb, whose menstrual blood is the fertilizing rain and the cool dew; who rules the tides of the oceans, the first womb of life on earth. So the moon is also Mistress of Waters: the waves of the sea, streams, springs, the rivers that are the arteries of Mother Earth; of lakes, deep wells, and hidden pools, and of feelings and emotions, which wash over us like waves. The Moon Goddess has three aspects: As She waxes, She is the Maiden; full, She is the Mother; as She wanes, She is the Crone. Part of the training of every initiate involves periods of meditation on the Goddess in her many aspects. I don't have space to include all of these, but I will share with you the meditations on the three aspects of the moon:

EXERCISE 39: WAXING MOON MEDITATION

Ground and center. Visualize a silver crescent moon, curving to the right. She is the power of beginning, of growth and generation. She is wild and untamed, like ideas and plans before they are tempered by reality. She is the blank page, the unplowed field. Feel your own hidden possibilities and latent potentials; your power ã begin and grow. See her as a silver-haired girl running freely through the forest under the slim moon. She is Virgin, eternally unpenetrated, belonging to no one ãut herself. Call her name "Nimue!" and feel her power within you.

EXERCISE 40: FULL MOON MEDITATION

Ground and center, and visualize a round full moon. She is the Mother, the power of fruition. She nourishes what the New Moon has begun. See her open, arms, her full breasts, her womb burgeoning with life. Feel your own power to nurture, to give, to make manifest what is possible. She is the

sexual woman; her pleasure in union is the moving force that sustains all life. Feel the power in your own pleasure, in orgasm. Her color is the red of blood, which is life. Call her name Mari!" and feel your own ability to love.

EXERCISE 41: WANING MOON MEDITATION

Ground and center. Visualize a waning crescent, curving to the left, surrounded by a black sky. She is the Old Woman, the Crone who has passed menopause, the power of ending, of death. All things must end to fulfill their beginnings. The grain that was planted must be cut down. The blank page must be destroyed, for the work to be written. Life feeds on death-death leads on to life, and in that knowledge lies wisdom. The Crone is the Wise Woman, infinitely old. Feel your own age, the wisdom of evolution stored in every cell of your body. Know your own power to end, to lose as well as gain, to destroy what is stagnant and decayed. See the Crone cloaked in black under the waning moon; call her name "Anu!" and feel her power in your own death.

The triad of the moon becomes the pentad, the five fold star of birth, initiation, love, repose, and death. The Goddess is manifest in the entire life cycle. Women are valued and respected in old age, as well as youth. Birth and childhood, of course, are common to all cultures. But our society has not, until recently, conceptualized the stage of initiation, of personal exploration and self-discovery, as necessary for women. Girls were expected to pass directly from childhood to marriage and motherhood-from control by their fathers to control by their husbands. An initiation demands courage and self-reliance, traits that girls were not encouraged to develop. Today, the stage of initiation may involve establishing a career, exploring relationships, or developing one's creativity. Women who have missed this stage in their youth often find it necessary .

EXERCISE 42: THE DOUBLE SPIRAL

Ground and center. Visualize a double spiral. When you see it clearly, let it grow until you stand within it, and follow it inward, moving counterclockwise. It becomes a maze of high, clipped hedges, then a labyrinth of stone walls; its winding turns are the passageway to a hidden secret. As you move through the spiral, the world dissolves, form dissolves, until you are in the hidden heart where birth and death are one. The center of the spiral shines; it is the North Star, and the arms of the spiral are the Milky Way, a myriad of stars slowly revolving around the still center point. You are in Spiral Castle, at the back of the North Wind. Explore it in your imagination. See who you meet, what you learn. You are in the womb of the Goddess, floating free. Now feel yourself pushed and squeezed, moving out through the spiral, which is now the vaginal passage of rebirth. Move clockwise through the double spiral of your DNA. Now it becomes a whirlwind-fly with it. Let it become the twining

tendrils of a plant-a crystal-a shell-an orbiting electron. Time is a spiral-the cycles endlessly repeating, yet always moving. Know the spiral as the underlying form of all energy. As you emerge, let it return to its small, abstract, symbolic form. Thank it, and let it disappear.

The Charge of the Goddess, reflects the Craft understanding of the Goddess. It begins with a long list of Goddess names, drawn from many cultures. These are not seen as separate beings but, rather, different aspects of the same Being that is all beings. The names used may change with the seasons or preferences of the speaker: for example, the Goddess might be named Kore in the spring, after the Maiden aspect of the Greek Goddess. A Witch of Jewish heritage might call on the ancient Hebrew Goddess as Ashimah or Asherah; an Afro- American Witch might prefer Yemaja, the West African Goddess of the sea and love. In most traditions of the Craft, the inner name of the Goddess is recognized to embody great power, and so is kept secret, revealed only to initiates. The outer names most commonly used are Diana, for the Goddess of the moon, and Aradia, her daughter, whom legends say was sent to earth to liberate people by teaching them the arts of magic. "Need of anything" refers to both spiritual and material needs. In Witchcraft, there is no separation. The Goddess is manifest in the food we eat, the people we love, the work we do, the homes in which we live. It is not considered ignoble to ask for needed goods and comforts. "Work for yourself, and you will see that Self is everywhere," is a saying of the Faery Tradition. It is through the material world that we open ourselves to the Goddess. But Witchcraft also recognizes that when material needs are satisfied deeper needs and longings may remain. These can only be satisfied by connection with the nurturing, life-giving forces within, which we call Goddess.

Meet at the full moon, in honor of the Goddess.