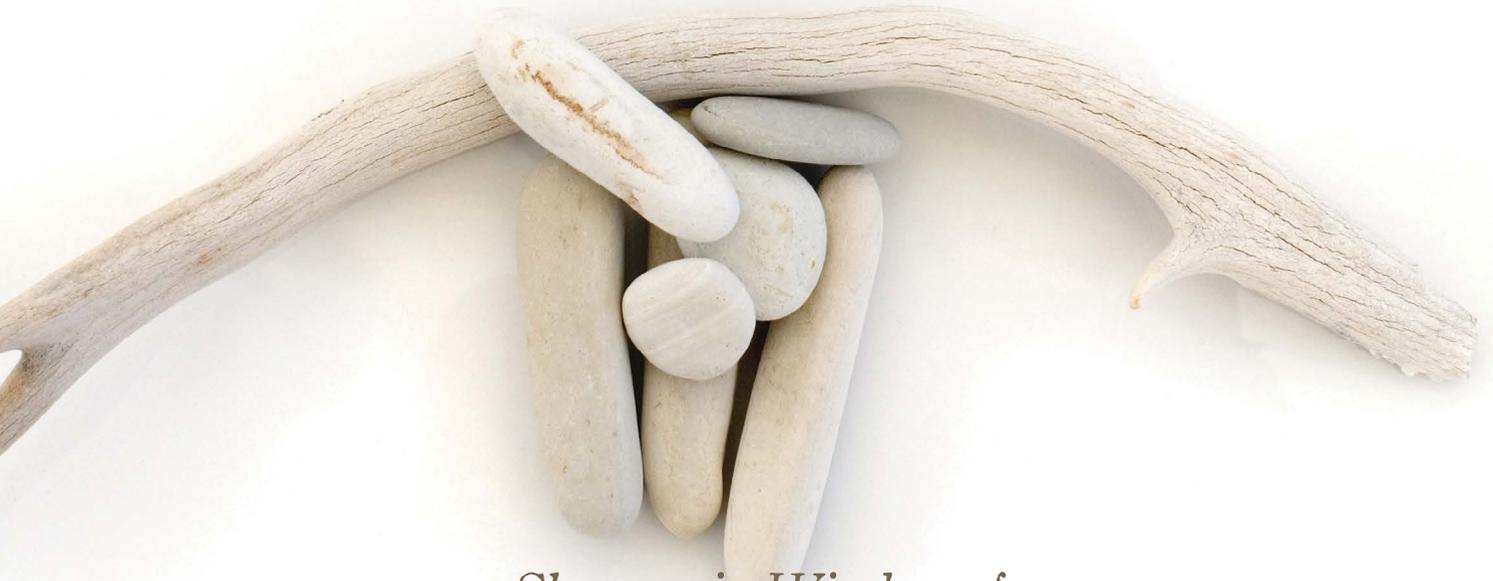




The / Book of
CEREMONY



*Shamanic Wisdom for
Invoking the Sacred in Everyday Life*

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BOOK EXCERPT



HONORABLE CLOSURE

We all go through transitions that involve leaving a relationship, changing jobs, moving, or saying goodbye to a loved one who has passed away. I've learned a lot over the years about honorable closure. Sometimes a ceremony needs to be performed to close the door to future conversations. But people who break up can become good friends by dissolving the unhealthy energetic ties that bind them together. A ceremony can help people move their relationship gracefully from being lovers to being friends.

We do not want to be burdened by our past. The energy of the past can create so much weight on our body and emotions that we cannot truly move on to create a healthy present and future. As much as we desire healthier and more meaningful relationships, we often end up trapped, creating the same situations over and over. The faces might change, but the story remains the same.

There comes a time in our own growth and evolution when we must let go of the ties that bind us to our past, whether it means leaving a job, a place, or a relationship. We must leave the old behind while carrying the good memories and life lessons. We all want the freedom to create beneficial relationships and life circumstances that bring us new opportunities for growth. We cannot do this while we hang on

to the past. That's why ceremonies that provide us with honorable closure are such a powerful tool for healing.

RELEASING AND TRANSFORMING UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Here is guidance for an unwinding ceremony you can perform before, during, or after ending a relationship with a partner, a friend, or even a coworker.

Visit a place in nature and spend time processing the feelings that your relationship brings up for you. Prepare and greet the helping spirits or spiritual forces you wish to engage in the unwinding act. State out loud or in silence that you are grateful for all the lessons you received in your relationship but that it is now time to move on.

Allow any emotions that emerge to flow so that you do not blindly move into a place of anger or hurt when you are ready to do your unwinding ceremony. When you consciously process your anger, feelings of hurt, or any trauma associated with the ending of the relationship, you step into a place of empowerment, and you will have more success with performing your ceremony.

Invite one or two friends who support you and can hold the space for you, or you can experience the power of working alone. Decide

what you personally need. Some people might feel awkward processing emotion with others, while other people feel supported by it. We all have unique needs, and it is important to honor what feels right to you.

Once you have received clarity that you are ready to release the ties that bind you, gather your materials and design your ceremony. Feel free to adapt this guidance to make the ceremony your own.

Walk the land and find a stick to use in your ceremony. Keep your ceremony simple and drum, rattle, dance, and/or sing as you focus on your intention to release all ties to your unhealthy relationship. When you feel that you are in full connection with your soul through your preparation work and that you have the helping spirits or the divine forces you work with witnessing you, it is time to break the stick. This signifies honorable closure with the person you wish to be released from. End by leaving an offering on the land and thanking the helping spirits who witnessed your work.

This can also be done as a spontaneous ceremony when you are taking a walk in nature and feel intuitively guided to break an unhealthy energetic connection.

If you have friends with you, thank them for their support. Take some time to reflect on how you are feeling. You might still need to do some processing over time, but you should feel some relief and that a weight has been lifted from you.

DEATH IS NOT AN END — IT IS A TRANSITION

In shamanic cultures, it is understood that death is a rite of passage as we move on to a new phase in our soul's journey. For this reason, death is not feared as it is for so many living in our world today.

Ceremonies to honor the deceased come in many forms, including celebrating the life of the deceased while recognizing the grief of the loved ones left.

I lead many memorials. It's a practice I've come to love. So much healing and closure can happen at a memorial led in a ceremonial way. This does not mean there is not more grieving to do, but having a sense of closure brings healing to loved ones, friends, and the community.

From a shamanic point of view, we are born into this life on Earth to live in a human body and experience life with our full senses; to learn about love; to create beauty, health, and peace; and to learn many other lessons. This is a place where we can evolve.

When a person dies, Earth is no longer their home. Their home is back to Source.

This does not mean when we perform a ceremony honoring a loved one's journey back to Source that we are trying to erase their memory. On the contrary, we continue to stay connected spiritually. A deceased loved one might become a helping spirit for a descendent. But Earth is for the living, and journeying home to Source is for the deceased. This journey is what we acknowledge during an honorable closure ceremony.

CEREMONY: BLOWING BUBBLES OF LOVE

I sometimes use bubbles that I buy at a toy store for a group to send a loved one on journey home in a ceremony filled with grace, love, and light. There is great healing that comes from bringing an element of joy into a ceremony where people are grieving a loss.

I led a memorial ceremony for my mother, but I also performed a ceremony at her funeral. I kept it very simple. I talked about my mom and how much I loved her. I spoke about her

life and what she contributed to me, her family, and the world by her presence. And then I asked all who were present to stand up and lift their arms to wish her a good journey home. We then blew bubbles toward the sky as we continued our prayers for her and remembered the joy she had brought into our lives.

CEREMONIES FOR BURYING A PET

If you perform a burial ceremony for a beloved pet, you can place food and maybe a bit of water or milk in the grave. Share words of love for this precious animal who was a family member. Then raise your arms while wishing your pet a loving journey home that is filled with light, love, grace, and ease.

CEREMONIES FOR HONORING TREES

When a tree dies on my property, I visit with it. I thank it for the beauty and grace that it shared with all of life on this great Earth, while wishing it a good journey home. I leave an offering of blue corn meal in honor of its life.

I have received quite a bit of correspondence from people who were once loggers. They feel so much guilt about killing stately and oftentimes ancient trees. I share the ceremony I do with my trees. You can perform the same ceremony for a mountainside where logging has occurred. You might not be able to talk to each tree individually, but you can stand in the affected area.

After preparing, say what is in your heart to the deceased trees, even if they have been removed. Drum, rattle, sing, and/or dance while praying in your own way that the trees have a good journey home. Thank them for their beautiful and powerful presence on the Earth. Leave heartfelt offerings. This same

ceremony can be performed for trees lost in a blight or during a forest fire.

SPONTANEOUS CEREMONIES

You might witness an accident or another traumatic event or come across the body of a deceased animal. Many shamanic practitioners carry offerings in their car or on their person for such an event. At the scene of an accident, say a prayer for those impacted and leave an offering on the land. With a creature found dead on the road or while walking in nature, you might say prayers of honor and respect for its life and for gracing this Earth with its presence, leave an offering, and even bury it in a ceremonial way if the situation allows.

While grieving any death, we often feel heartbroken. Though this is painful, it gives our hearts the opportunity to open, expand, and embrace more compassion.



SANDRA INGERMAN, MA, is an award-winning author of 12 books and a world-renowned teacher of shamanism who has been teaching for more than 30 years. She has taught workshops internationally on shamanic journeying, healing, and reversing environmental pollution using spiritual methods. Sandra is recognized for bridging ancient cross-cultural healing methods into our modern culture, addressing the needs of our times. Sandra is a licensed marriage and family therapist and professional mental health counselor. She is also a board-certified expert on traumatic stress. She was awarded the 2007 Peace Award from the Global Foundation for Integrative Medicines. Sandra was chosen as one of the Top 10 Spiritual Leaders of 2013 by *Spirituality & Health* magazine.

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