Key Points

The spirits are not simply another resource in this exquisite world to be used, consumed, or squandered. They are not here to do our bidding, but to teach us who we are, why we are here, and what it means to be truly and fully human. --Stephan Beyer

All "allies" and "tools" are not objects or resources but living beings in their own right. Plants, animals, metals, oceans—all aspects of nature—are beings in their own right and for the sake of the Whole. They aren't resources at all. They are fellow-Earthlings and teachers.

True shamans partner with allies for the benefit of the greater good. It's not about what's best for me or you or all humans but what's best for all beings, including other animals, plants, elements, etc. and not about what's for Planet Earth but for the whole cosmos. To the extent that it’s about me/you, it’s about power for bringing through our gifts to be of service to the greater good.

We expect the pink neon buffalo to come on lightning that transforms us, but the spirits have been talking to us all the time, through the bat guano on the cave floor. We already live in the magical forest. All we have to do is open our hearts. --Stephan Beyer

Shamans worked with what was available in that time and place. More vegetarian cultures made rattles from gourds; Plains Indians made them from animal hides. Eastern Woodlands Indians built sweat lodges out of trees; Desert Southwesterners out of mud.

Allies Include ... (Note: this list is not exhaustive!)

- Other Humans: Ancestors, Descendants (of blood or spirit; human and other-than-human)
- Animals: watching them, knowing what their behaviors mean. For example, one jungle shaman could tell the precise location of a leopard hundreds of yards away by the alarm calls of monkeys; crows have a special alarm cry for hawks and airborne dangers, another for cats on the ground, another for cats in a tree, etc.
- Plants: all, but especially sacred plants of that region, like tobacco, cornmeal, sage, sweetgrass in the USA; lavendar in old European traditions, cedar in the Pacific Northwest, etc. Entheogens/hallucinogenics would also be included.
- Land: Oversoul of a Place/Land
- Elements: fire to burn what needs to be transformed; earth, air, and water to take toxins or cleanse (smudge, anointing ...), stones and crystals to heal, etc.
- Crafted beings: wooden staff, rattle, drum, eye curtain, mask, porcupine quill, brass mirror, bells, singing bowls, regalia, spirit houses, soul catchers, etc.
- Songs, Stories, & Dances
- Nature spirits: faeries/fey etc. but also the Seasons and the Directions
- Celestials: Sun, Moon, Stars ...
- Angels & demons
### Types & Degrees of Mediumship: Transfiguring, Merging, and Shapeshifting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>What Happens</th>
<th>Your Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfiguring</td>
<td>There was only one and there is still only one – you, the &quot;real&quot; you, your infinite soul-self</td>
<td>You take off your flesh and your bones to become your light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Merged Interaction</td>
<td>Two of you are present: you and the being with whom you are interacting; you interact as two fully separate beings</td>
<td>You remain fully present as yourself, separate from the other being with whom you’re interacting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merging or Shared Consciousness</td>
<td>You and the animal (or teacher) become one; the percentages vary, but both you and the being/energy being mediumed are present</td>
<td>You do NOT disappear, though you “recede”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shapeshifting or Full Trance State (Morphing)</td>
<td>There was only ever one and there is just one – the animal/other being’s form</td>
<td>You disappear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Middle World Spirits and Spirit Groups/Collectives

*The spirits are not simply another resource in this exquisite world to be used, consumed, or squandered. They are not here to do our bidding, but to teach us who we are, why we are here, and what it means to be truly and fully human. --Stephan Beyer*

They aren’t resources at all but fellow-Earthlings and teachers. True shamans partner with allies for the benefit of the greater good. It’s not about what’s best for me or you or all humans but what’s best for all beings, including other animals, plants, elements, etc. and not about Planet Earth but the whole cosmos. To the extent that it’s about me/you, it’s about bringing through our gifts to be of service to the whole.

### Power Is Not Distributed Equally

Non-egoic spirits are formless energy; we call them into form to more readily relate to Source energy. “Ethnocentric” (egoic) compassionate spirits (ECS) exist in many forms: deities, Nature spirits, elementals, animals, plants, fey, angels, ascended masters, celestials, etc. Some spirits are more powerful than we are; some are our peers; yet others are less powerful than we are.

A review of the ethnographic literature suggests that there are three main types of ethnocentric compassionate spirits (ECS’s): tutelary spirits, guardian spirits or power animals, and lesser helping spirits.

1. **Tutelary Spirits.** The most formidable and potentially dangerous are the ancestral or tutelary spirits. These spirits usually dominate the shaman and cannot be controlled, only placated. For example, a Goldi shaman met his ayami, or ancestral female spirit in this way. She announced that she had come to be his wife, to teach him how to heal and to give him assistant spirits. Although the man said, “I felt dismayed and tried to resist,” the spirit would not take no for an answer. Instead she threatened him: “If you will not obey me, so much the worse for you. I

---

1 The bulk of this section is an excerpt from Mary Courtis, * Spirits in the Chest: Ethnocentric Compassionate Spirits and Their Roles in Tribal and Core Shamanism*, January 2008 (unpublished manuscript).
shall kill you.” Needless to say the poor man capitulated on the spot!

2. **Guardian Spirits or Power Animals.** Next in power and prominence are the ECS’s that work in partnership with humans. These spirits usually appear to the shaman in animal form. Often referred to as *guardian spirits or power animals*, these ECS’s may provide power and protection for an individual throughout their life. In some cases they may also be acquired during a vision quest, usually at puberty. These spirits usually do not dominate the shaman like the more powerful tutelary spirits. However, guardian spirits usually provide protection and guidance to an individual only as long as the shaman honors it and abides by its rules. Either the shaman or the spirit may break bargain or sever the relationship. Tribal shamans who convert to Christianity, for example, frequently lose the powers they once enjoyed.

To practitioners of core shamanism, the realization that many indigenous people have ECS’s as power animals may come as quite a shock. Core shamanic practitioners are used to meeting their power animals in the Lower World. So they may automatically assume that the power animals of indigenous people also come from this realm when they do not. It is also common for core shamanic practitioners to assume that an animal spirit is always compassionate and resides in the Lower World even if they meet the animal in the Middle World. These assumptions can lead to a “conceptual blind spot.” By the same token, indigenous people may be just as quick to assume that a core shamanic practitioner’s power animals must be treated as carefully as they treat their own or disaster will result.

3. **Lesser Helping Spirits.** The third type of ECS is called a *lesser helping spirit*. These spirits can be “trapped” and manipulated by human beings directly and wield considerably less power than the other kinds of ECS’s. In some cases the more powerful types of ECS’s can be enlisted to keep these spirits in line if they disobey the shaman. You may feed these spirits, but you do not have to feed them in order to maintain power over them. Lesser helping spirits are also the ones used most frequently for sorcery. While it is clear that shamans can use ECS’s against others, ECS’s may also compel humans to engage in sorcery. Sorcerers may well be possessed by bad spirits and commit acts under their influence.

### Levels of Compassion in Helping Spirits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Ego Status</th>
<th>Primary Dwelling Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fully Compassionate Spirits</td>
<td>no ego</td>
<td>(Spiritual) Upper/Lower World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Compassionate Spirits In Training</td>
<td>awakened/enlightened ego</td>
<td>(Material) Middle World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. (Semi-) Compassionate Spirits</td>
<td>unenlightened ego</td>
<td>(Material) Middle World</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Insert Your Power and Sovereignty in the Relationship**

Some classical shamanic traditions work exclusively with middle world spirits. In these, even the shaman can be taken over and placed into servitude by powerful middle world helping spirits. If it can happen to them, it can certainly happen to you!

Be clear about the nature of the spirit(s) you are working with. Do not assume that any spirit that comes to you is compassionate. Teachers, ancestor spirits and power animals can be both compassionate and ethnocentric compassionate spirits.

Tip-offs that your helping spirit has ego/is Middle World are
• they have needs and so make requests (ask you to sacrifice incense, put out food for them, etc.); this is appropriate—they need to eat just like we do, and we don’t take without giving back; or

• they tell you that you “should” (versus “could”) take a particular action; they get angry or judgmental or pushy or whiny or whatever with you, at times make you feel bad or guilty or like you've done something wrong.

Working with any middle world spirit safely requires that certain protocols be followed, often fairly precisely, so they are not ideal helping spirits to start off with; it’s better to add them in later. Luckily, it's not that hard to avoid any problems once you know a few simple secrets.

**Tips for Working with Middle World Helping Spirits**

1. Make a clear journey intention that you only want to meet a non-egoic spirit (e.g. “I want to meet my ego-less manifestation of Source at this time”). Or have someone experienced check to make sure it's one with no ego. [Note: In many American Indian traditions, no one journeys to find their own helping spirit—this is considered impossible or something that opens you to trickery. The medicine person/shaman must journey to find your helping spirit. Some traditions add that no one journeys ever unless the shaman goes with them on the journey. I think this change to greater individual participation and power is one more way that classical shamanism is evolving, in part due to the paradigm shift that's happening.]

2. Ask your non-egoic one which other helping spirits you already work with, if any, or that you meet are egoic spirits. Egoic ones are fine when you know their nature and have clear contracts.

3. Accept no additional helping spirits unless they have been approved by your non-egoic helping spirit. Questions to ask include "Are they egoic or not?" "What will I learn if I work with them?" "Will they make a good team player and work well with my other helping spirits?"

4. When you first start working with a new egoic spirit that has been approved by your non-egoic helper, immediately ask the new spirit “why have you come to me and what do you want or need from me?” If they are non-egoic, the answer will be nothing, that they are simply here to support you on your path. Egoic ones will have needs just like we do, as this is legitimate. You simply want to know up front the nature of your contract with them, what they will do for you and what you will do for them.

5. Until you have a solid working relationship with at least one compassionate (ego-free) helping spirit and are able to interpret what they are telling you and understand their metaphors, make sure all your journeys are to the realm of compassion, aka Otherworld, not middle world (by having that as part of your intention for the journey, e.g. 'I'm going to the realm of compassion to meet with [my known, ego-free helping spirit] for [guidance on xxx]. Deception is possible even in dreams or ordinary reality omens.

6. When working with an egoic spirit, always have your egoless helping spirit with you and yet everything the middle world spirits say through them; check to make sure their guidance is okay and that your non-egoic helping spirit agrees. The non-egoic, fully compassionate spirit acts as a mediator to guard against zinging and dips into sorcery.

7. Always journey with a clearly stated intention, one that includes that you are asking only your own known ego-free helping spirit and inviting no one else who has not been approved by that helping spirit. Otherwise, you're just "out there" fishing. The intention determines the
journey, and having none often means that you’re inviting in any spirit anywhere who wants to be with you for whatever reason.

**Protect and Strengthen Egoic Spirits**

Think twice before revealing the identity of your middle world helpers. They are vulnerable, as are you. Anyone who knows their identity and wants to harm you can go to your egoic spirit and make them a better offer or deal to get them to leave you or turn them against you.

Have your non-egoic spirit mentor and “feed” your egoic helpers, taking care of the egoic ones’ energetic needs so that they do not drain you. You can often also connect with the Middle World spirit’s own non-egoic version for this work (e.g., connect Middle World Jesus with non-egoic Jesus).

Compassionate spirit helpers can also protect the egoic ones from being killed or injured. For example, in some shamanic traditions, egoic spirits are implanted in a person’s chakras and need to be fed regularly in order to remain strong and healthy. They can also die or be injured trying to protect the person they inhabit. Placing them in the care of a compassionate helping spirit allows them to evolve and flourish much better than doing ceremonies to feed them yourself. Egoic spirits are usually grateful to be mentored and cared for by the stronger compassionate spirits.

**Ensure Cultural Respect & Reciprocity**

Work with them in proper context, for example by helping members of their tribe or group). Work with American Indian helping spirits and their contemporary peoples to heal, as culturally appropriate and respectful, the people and their lands. Working to end cultural appropriation or offensive sports team names and icons is also good. Work to help the spirit of the Chesapeake Bay detox itself of human waste and damage.

Establish tribal ties or relationships with egoic helping spirits. Mindful of cultural appropriation, study or work with the indigenous people who have been working with these spirits for generations and have already worked out specific protocols and procedures for conducting rituals and doing healing that are appropriate for that spirit. Be aware that if you study or work with tribal shamans or indigenous traditions, you are more likely to encounter middle world helping spirits, because that’s usually who they’re working with.

**Working Safely with Collectives or Groups of Helping Spirits**

*Written by Shamanic Practitioner Mary Courtis*

Examples of these are the Ascended Masters, Angelic Collectives, Great White Brotherhood, etc.

1. Before working with a group of beings, be familiar and practiced at working with ONE non-egoic compassionate spirit.
2. Before working with a group of beings, have them vetted by your non-egoic spirit and your regular helpers. Ask these known helpers “Is the new helper or group an appropriate group for me to work with? What will I learn by working with them?”
3. Before working with a group of beings, you should have a clear idea about why the group experience is necessary. For example, if I call in a group of ancestral spirits I have a clear intention of calling them only when I have a spirit from their group to cross or who otherwise needs their assistance. I do not call them just because I think it would be cool to do so or because everyone I know is doing it or I read it in a book.
Bring Through Your Helping Spirit’s Consciousness, Not Just Their Form

Gratitude to Mark Seven for raising these points!

Shamanically, "power" does *not* mean the mainstream definition but the ability to shift consciousness. A spirit’s power is not just their form but their compassionate consciousness. When working with our spirit helpers, bring them through with much consciousness, so that their consciousness may be as present in the work as possible. Do not just bring through raw power or “untempered potency” without much of the guiding consciousness connected with it. Connecting or merging with the power or energy of a Lion or Sekhmet without really calling on, bringing through, or connecting with the wisdom of Lioness or the compassion of non-egoic Sekhmet can manifest a great deal of potency but without much benefit of consciousness.

And it's common to get too attached to the form taken (e.g., Lioness, Sekhmet) and forget the ultimate energy or consciousness being tapped into as well as the consciousness of the Lioness or Sekhmet. When working with ethnocentric (egoic, middle world) spirits, you can get a better picture of their “consciousness” if you

- know their strengths,
- know their weaknesses, and
- know what situations they're best at.