



# Shamanic Journey: Basic Method

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## What You'll Experience

Some people have a great, deep journey the first time and are profoundly transformed; some don't get anywhere or can't turn off the mind chatter; most are somewhere in between these two extremes. The only way to find out is to step through the Shaman's doorway and see for yourself if shamanic journey is right for you.

## The "Non-Egoic" Helping Spirit: Your Connection to Source

The shamanic journey is a way for your soul/"True Soul-Self" to have a direct experience with "Source"—aka God or Buddha Mind or Mystery or Oneness, etc. "Non-spiritual" people often feel a deep connection to the center of their being. This Source is thought to be formless, and most of us find it hard to have a conversation or deep relationship with something formless and as vast as infinity. We ask Source to make itself into a form to more readily relate to Source.

*Shamanism is a powerful means for learning firsthand the oneness and sacredness of all things.*

*Each journey is a merging into that oneness of the universe, a union with timeless wisdom and compassion ... you are no longer separated from that wisdom.*

— David Corbin and Nan Moss

This form is often called a "power animal" or totem if it's an animal and is often called a "teacher" (or angel or spirit guide) if it's a human. I use the generic term "helping spirit" for both. Be open: your helping spirit can show up as a child, someone from the future, a "mythical," cartoon, or extinct species; you never know. The work deepens with each journey, as you build a loving and trusting relationship with your "guide" or "inner knowing." This non-egoic Source is never judgmental or angry, unless acting something out for you. Its "agenda" is your growth; it will protect you from unnecessary harm but not from life's lessons.

The Middle World includes all realms where time and space exist. Beings who live in this Middle World reality with us also have egos and include trees, animals, plants, mountains, rivers, egoic forms of gods and goddesses, hidden folk, elements, beings from other planets, and many more forms. As we understand it, all egoic/Middle World beings also have a non-egoic version because the physical and spiritual realms aren't truly separate. It's good to work with Middle World ("egoic") helping spirits, but we ask that your first one be non-Middle World and non-egoic, because of certain advantages and because working with Middle World beings requires special protocols.

## Where We Go When We Journey

To connect with Source, we use a type of meditation or trance called a journey. This ability to journey is not limited to shamans: most people can achieve it with practice. The altered state carries us out of the "Middle World," which is ruled by time and space, into the timeless, endless realms, usually called the Upper and Lower Worlds.



## How We Get There

**Percussion "Horse."** This altered state of consciousness can be achieved any number of ways; drumming is the most commonly used shamanic method as well as the simplest and safest. Scientists have shown that a steady, monotonous drum beat of 205 to 220 beats per minute induces a theta-level trance state in the human brain. The drum acts as a horse or canoe to transport the shamanic traveler on the journey to the spirit worlds and back.

**Intention "Horse."** Always journey with a purpose or question or intention; your intention guides your journey and directs what unfolds. The recommended first journey's purpose is to meet your "power animal" or other personal connection to Mystery, Source... it doesn't have to be an animal. A good first question is "I'd like to meet my egoless connection to Source at this time." If at any point in your journey you are not sure if a given being you meet is your connection to Source, you can ask them if they are.

**Entryways or Portals to the Journey Realms.** Both Upper and Lower Worlds take you to the same place: that realm of endless, timeless, infinity. Give yourself permission to just make it up, much as you would a daydream.

When the journey begins, see or sense your chosen entryway and be in front of it. Repeat your journey purpose or question to yourself three times or so, and enter your entryway. Some simply focus on their question or intention and are instantly "there"; without going through a portal, they are at the place where their answer is. The classic entryway used varies from culture to culture.

A method common to many shamanic cultures is to visualize a "real" (not fictional) opening into the earth. This "realness" will anchor you in this reality, increasing the power of your journey as well as making it easy to return. Your opening can be one that you remember from sometime in your life: an animal burrow, hollow tree stump, cave, lake, swamp, Dupont Circle escalator down to the subway, and so on. Some traditions step through a mist or fog or enter the image in a photograph or painting. Find one that feels comfortable to you, and one that you can visualize or sense. If you feel yourself going down, a tunnel may appear; enter the tunnel. At the end of the tunnel, emerge into a landscape. This "down into the earth" realm is called the "Lower World."

If you are uncomfortable with the thought of going into the earth and prefer to go up instead, you can visualize a tree, ladder, or rope that you climb up or simply lift off the ground and rise into the air. Go up until you feel yourself pass through a gentle barrier, like a bubble or mist, then emerge into a landscape. This "upward, into the sky" realm is called the "Upper World."

### **The Journey Landscape**

Once through the tunnel or marker that delineates this ordinary reality from the journey landscape, you may find yourself in a place that looks like your own backyard, or on Jupiter, or underwater, or in a forest ... anywhere is possible. Explore the lower or upper world landscape with your journey question or purpose in mind until the steady drumbeat ends.

### **How We Return: The "Call Back"**

When the time is up, the drumming will pause to signal the end of the journey. You will then hear four drum rolls; say thank you and goodbye to the being who appeared as your spiritual connection. Then reverse your steps and come back the same way you started; a 30-second, very rapid drumbeat will bring you back. Come out your entryway. Four final drum rolls will bring you fully back in the here and now again.

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