



Shamanic Journey: Basic Method

Mary "Tyrle" Rooker, <http://www.ShamanicSpring.com/> Rev. 7/28/11

Shamanism is a powerful means for learning first hand 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

The shamanic journey is a way to have a direct experience with Source (or God or Buddha Mind or Mystery or ...), with what I call the Loving and Compassionate Spirits of the Universe, the Energy of love and compassion. The Energy/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. So we give it a face to help wrap our minds around it and ask Source to "shrink" itself into a form we can understand and relate to.

We call this form a power animal or totem if it's an animal; we call it a "teacher" (or angel or spirit guide) if it's a human. The work deepens with each journey, as you build a loving and trusting relationship with your guide.

You can also connect with beings who also live in this "Middle World" reality with us. These beings have egos and include trees, animals, plants, mountains, rivers, egoic forms of gods and goddesses, faeries, and many more forms. Working with these beings requires special protocols (contact Mary "Tyrle" Rooker for additional information on this).

Classic Tool: The Shamanic Journey

To connect with Source, we use a type of meditation or trance called a journey state. 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. This ability to journey is not limited to shamans: most people can achieve it with practice.

Shamanism is a path of knowledge, not of faith, and that knowledge cannot come from me or anyone else in this reality. To acquire that knowledge, ... it is necessary to step through the shaman's doorway and acquire empirical evidence. —Michael Harner

Journey with a Purpose

Always journey with a purpose or question or intention. 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. If at any point in your journey you are not sure if a given spirit is your connection, you can ask it.

Journey Technique

The specific technique used varies from culture to culture. We use a method taught by the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, which is to visualize an opening into the earth that you remember from sometime in your life. ... from childhood, or yesterday. Any entry into the ground will do, 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. Use one that feels comfortable to you, and one that you can visualize or sense. 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. This sky realm is called the “Upper World.” Both upper and lower worlds take you to the same place: that realm of endless, timeless, infinite compassion.

Lower World Method

When the journey begins, you’ll see or sense the entryway and be in front of it. Repeat your journey purpose or question to yourself 3 times or so, and enter the opening. If you feel yourself going down the hole, a tunnel will appear; enter the tunnel. At the end of the tunnel, you will emerge into a landscape.

Upper World Method

Go up until you feel yourself pass through a gentle barrier, like a bubble or mist. You will emerge into a landscape.

The Journey Landscape

Once through the tunnel or barrier, 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 until the steady drumbeat ends.

Journey’s End: 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 help bring you back. Come out your entryway. Four final drum rolls will help you feel fully back in the here and now again.

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 this technique feels right for you.

*Special note and acknowledgement: This method is based on my training with Michael Harner, Director of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies.
With gratitude to Michael for his powerful vision!*