



Journey Checklist

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Framing Your Question

Basic Phrasing Tips

- Ask only one question at a time; otherwise, you may not know which one is being answered.
- "What do I most need to know about ... (my role in this issue, this issue in general ...)"
- "What will I learn if I ... (form a close relationship with this person; take this job/workshop; study with this teacher...)"
- "Where is my power in [this situation/relationship/issue]?" This question can help you see how you've given away your power and show you how to come from a place of true power (compassion) rather than a place of either "victim" or "perpetrator." You may be shown, for example, how to heal/resolve the "button" in you that got pushed.

What, Where, When, Why

- Avoid When questions: prophecies can be off by centuries
- Do add in a time context: "What do I most need to know about ... *at this time?*"
- Avoid Why questions: Some whys are too big; we are just to live our lives as adventure and let go of need to know.
- Use caution with Yes or No questions. Spirits see life as an adventure and may say "yes," even though you'll be "hurt" by a lesson; the spirits protect you from harm but not from "lessons"; "lessons" are "good." Bones and other tools can be used for yes/no questions, but be careful not to give your authority away to the spirits.
- For Where questions, try the Sunbeam journey (Labrador Naskapi shamans). Visualize the places in question and look to see where the sunbeam in your journey is shining down. Look for a beam, not just sunshine.

Journeying for/about Others

- If you're journeying about a relationship issue:
 - Don't ask "What does this person need to change?"/"How can I get this person to change?"
 - Ask "How can I heal my relationship with this person?"
- Never journey or do any shamanic work with the intention to harm another or yourself.
- Always make sure you have consent/permission if journeying for another (unless they're in a coma).
 - Asking for help* is part of the healing process.
 - People are entitled to their illnesses, addictions, etc.
 - Do not assume that you know what's best for another person.

Controlling Mind Chatter

- See thoughts as clouds passing; gently repeat your intention over and over until your journey resumes; you can pick up where you left off or start over
- sing, dance, drum (many traditional shamans sing, dance, and drum for 3 days, then do a short journey)
- prep work helps: be mindful of food (not being too full or hungry), be rested, etc.
- connect with your infinite soul-self and leave your ego behind
- pull your awareness out of your head and into your heart, breathe into your heart
- start by shaking out what's on your mind

- be here and now, forget traffic to get here, errands or evening plans
- for some, being too comfy means you fall asleep; others need to be comfortable
- drum or rattle for yourself (live drumming or rattling)
- sing your journey aloud as you go
- set the intention that any sounds in the room during the journey will take you deeper into the journey; tell yourself that with any cough or sound you'll go deeper

Structure and Tools May Help. Having structures or unique signals tell your brain this is not anything else but Journey Time. Special journey tools include a blanket you only use for journeying, singing a special journey song, or wearing an eye curtain or special regalia or ritual items. Ritual and structure cultivate a Pavlovian response; they entrain the brain to a powerful “good” habit. Try Zero Point Exercise Before You Journey. Go to the space between things, invoke the state of nothingness, no gravity, the space between the beats of a drum.

Try Earth Merger Exercise Before You Journey. Merge with the Earth. As you become one with Earth, connect your heartbeat so your heartbeats are one. Once you are in this connective state, embrace the Earth energies with the understanding that you and the Earth are one --- one organism, one heartbeat. From this place of connection, ask your questions, do your healing work, or meditate.

Writing Your Journey Notes

Tip from Tom Cowan: Instead of writing your journey notes from your left brain as narrative, let three or four core, essential images of the experience arise in a kind of haiku-like poem that condense the experience in three or four brief lines. This will not describe the journey in its totality, but it is not meant to. The journey or dream was not a left-brain event so why should describing it be?

Interpreting Your Journey

Remember: the spirits speak in metaphors and symbols

- Did the journey feel easy or difficult?
- What was the weather, time of day/ year?
- What was the mood? Any colors or smells?
- How was the tunnel: dark or bright, damp or dry, warm or cold, jagged or smooth?
- What spirits or messages came through during dancing?
- If this had been a movie, what would the background music have been?

Filters. Your helping spirits will present the "answer" or "healing" using metaphors that make sense to you, that are tailored to you. So don't interpret another's journey, and don't ask anyone else to interpret your journeys for you. The filter works both ways:

- 1 - the spirits are tailoring the image or words or symbols, etc. to you, and
- 2 - we tailor the image, words, symbols, etc. to fit into our boxes, our reality.

It's also possible that you're distorting the answer (in a less helpful way) because it's coming through your filters. For example, someone occasionally perceives their power animal or teacher as being upset with them; this is just not possible to my knowledge. The perception is possible, but not the reality. The compassionate, ego-less helping spirits are not stubborn and don't act out, so don't ever think you're being punished or abandoned or whatever; the spirits have only the deepest compassion for you --- always.

Expanding Your Journeys from the Basics

Learn to ask the spirits for help.

Be the one experiencing the journey, not just "watching tv."

Shapeshift into your power animal while dancing or journeying.

Explore other openings, entryways, or starting points

(Enter through a picture or mandala; Celtic openings include fog, mist).

Explore other "horses": rattle, didgeridoo, song, waterfall (Celtic), and droning sounds.

Explore other positions: lying down, sitting, standing, dancing, walking.

(Caution: you can't polish/habituate/entrain if you keep distracting yourself with changes.)

Explore to find which opening, horse, position works best for you; stick with it. Once your practice is solid, try other entryways again.

Experiment with longer journeys ... and with shorter journeys!

Explore all three (upper, lower, and middle) worlds.

Explore the "levels" of the upper and lower worlds (caution: these levels aren't "real," just mental constructs that some find helpful).

Be able to journey alone (cd, drum, rattle, didj ...) At home or anywhere!

Be able to call your power animals or teachers to you when you're not journeying.

Practice "checking in" with them when you're not in trance to be able to get answers without journeying.

Deepening Your Connection to Source

Journey to your power animal or teacher and ask them what would deepen your connection to them or to Source at this time.

Transfigure (become one with Source, All That Is).

"Honor" and connect with your Self before journeying by moving or singing a special song to call yourself here and now ("calling up your song").

"Honor" and connect with your power animal/teacher before journeying by dancing with them or singing a special song to them.

We've lost a lot of power by giving up singing, dancing, and drumming. We can reclaim that power by vocalization and movement. Merge with your power animal and any teacher during dancing before journeying.

Journey to ancestors and descendants.

Connect with the land when you travel; introduce yourself and say why you're there.

Have one or more vacation spots in the journey realms.

Consider building a house for yourself in the upper and lower worlds.

Deepening Your Connection to Your Helping Spirit(s)

Study, dance, sing, write about, draw pictures of your power animal/teacher.

If your power animal is a common one who lives in your area, take them food or other offerings.

Ask your power animal or teacher to show you their home(s) in the upper and lower worlds.

Be able to call your helping spirit(s) to help you in Ordinary Reality/Middle World, everyday walking around, such as when you are lost and need to know which way to turn.

Do special journeys now and then to thank your power animal/teacher (take them food, have a picnic ... no question or request or work).

Make regalia or masks or eye curtains of your power animal or teacher. Journey first to ask them for a symbol or other information about how to make it.

Deepening Your Connection to Your Self

Have a power song/dance to call up your power.

Work on your issues, heal yourself

- care for your body: rest, exercise, diet ...
- care for your emotional well-being
- care for your mental state
- maintain your spiritual health

Regular practice is needed to maintain and care for your self.

Work for other people, animals, environment, non-violence, peace ... (journeying or praying or ritual, just be mindful of permission/ethical issues).

Work solo and in community.

Deepening Your Connection to the Rest of Nature, the Land

Connect with and communicate with all beings (rocks, mountains, rivers, trees, plants, animals, rattles, drums, etc...) as you would a person you respect.

Explain who you are and what you're doing on the land wherever you are.

Connect with a special power place in your home or outdoors; understand that a room, home, office, place has a soul of its own.

Connect with nature through walking meditations/journeys, sitting in a stream, birdwatching...

Meeting and Working with Other "Middle World" Helping Spirits

If you study indigenous shamanic traditions, you will likely work exclusively with Middle World spirits. It is wonderful to work with other Middle World spirits, because we live in the Middle World, and most Middle World spirits are delightful.

They are different from ego-less helping spirits though, and knowing the difference is important. Even a 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! 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. Luckily, it's not that hard to avoid these traps once you know a few simple secrets.

Tips for Working With Egoic Spirits

Special thanks to my colleague, Mary Courtis, for this section!

1. Start with just one helping spirit and have someone experienced check to make sure it's one with no ego (not a Middle World spirit).
2. Accept no additional helping spirits unless they have been thoroughly approved by helping spirit #1, who has no ego and is not a Middle World spirit.
3. Tip-offs that your helping spirit has ego are
 - they ask things of you (sacrifice incense, a chicken, put out food for them, etc.)
 - they get angry of judgmental or pushy or whiny or whatever with you, anything that makes you feel bad or guilty or like you've done something wrong
4. When you first meet a new helping spirit that has been approved by #1, immediately ask them "why have you come to me and what do you want or need from me?" The answer should be nothing, that they are simply here to support you on your path. And be suspicious if they start expecting something of you in a later journey.
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 (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]. Do not journey in the Middle World or follow guidance from dreams or ordinary reality omens, where deception is possible.
6. Once you start working with Middle World spirits, always have your ego-free helping spirit with you and vet everything the Middle World spirits say through them; check to make sure their guidance is okay and that your ego-free helping spirit agrees.
7. Always, always, 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." The intention determines the journey, and having none often means that any spirit anywhere who wants to be with you for whatever reason is being invited in.

WITH DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO MY TEACHER, SANDRA INGERMAN

I HIGHLY RECOMMEND HER BOOK-CD, SHAMANIC JOURNEYING: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

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