



## Healing Rituals and Rites of Passage

### *What is a ritual?*

You can think of a ritual as an action or set of actions that is performed to bring about a desired change. As you perform an action with purposeful intent, in a focused manner, you are creating on the physical plane a symbol of a change you want to make in your mental, emotional, or spiritual state. That action speaks to your subconscious, helping you bring about the change you desire. Alternatively, you could use visualization to see and feel yourself making the desired change. Or a ritual could contain both mental and physical components.

Whether acted out on the physical plane, done mentally, or as a combination of both physical and mental "action," the effect is the same: using ritual to focus your intent helps manifest the change you desire.

Here's an example. Let's say you want to separate yourself from an unhealthy relationship. One way to sever that unhealthy connection ritually might be to use a physical cord to represent the relationship. You could carefully select a cord that seems to you to symbolize the relationship. Perhaps it somehow "looks" and "feels" like the relationship to you. Setting aside a special time to do your ritual, you spend some time with the cord to create in your mind the identification of the cord with the unhealthy connection. Perhaps you place one end of the cord at a photo of the person you need to disconnect from and hold the other end in your hand. Then with focused intent you sever the cord with a knife or scissors with the intent that the cutting of the cord represents the ending of the relationship. Such a cord cutting can also be done as a mental ritual act to accomplish the same purpose, using a strongly visualized cord instead of a physical one. In either case the focused intent created by performing the act as a ritual, rather than just cutting a piece of string or simply thinking about yourself separating from the relationship, allows the act to speak to your subconscious so that your inner self recognizes and accepts the change you are intending to create. (There are also indications that such ritual acts may have an effect in the material world, but that's a whole other topic.)

Other rituals might be more elaborate, involving several steps to help you accomplish the desired goal. A ritual might even symbolize or celebrate a major change in your life. These life-transition rituals are known as *rites of passage*.

### *What is a rite of passage?*

A rite of passage is a ritual that marks the transition of one life stage to another. The baptism of an infant and a bar mitzva are rites of passage, marking the beginning of a Christian life in the first instance, and the transition from childhood to manhood of a Jewish boy in the second. A wedding is also a rite of passage, from the single to the married state, and a funeral or memorial is a rite of passage marking a person's transition from life to death.

Other rites of passage might occur at other points in your life depending on your desire. For example a woman might choose to celebrate menopause by holding a Croning ritual, marking her transition from

the potential of motherhood to taking on the mantle of a wise elder in her community. Or someone who has received a clean bill of health after a battle with cancer might choose to perform a rite of passage to celebrate their transition back to health.

Whatever the circumstances, a rite of passage is a ritual performed at a liminal point in your life: at the threshold between two major states of being. You enter the ritual in one state—single in a wedding, for example—and exit the ritual in a changed state—wedded to another in our example.

### *Creating a ritual or rite of passage*

As an ordained Interfaith Minister, with training in many religious and spiritual traditions, I can assist you in creating a ritual or rite of passage for any occasion to suit your unique needs. I have had experience creating literally hundreds of rituals of all sorts and can help you define your needs and create a ritual that can range from secular to deeply religious, as you desire. I can officiate at your ritual if you wish, or I can simply help you define your goals so you can conduct the ritual yourself.

Contact me if you would like to learn more about how I can help you design a ritual to aid you in achieving your goal. I would be glad to meet with you for a free consultation to discuss your ritual needs.

### *Bibliography*

Achterberg, Jeanne; Dossey, Barbara and Kolkmeier, Leslie: *Rituals of Healing: Using Imagery for Health and Wellness*. New York: Bantam Books, 1994.

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