



R I T U A L

Fundamentals of Ritual

Creating Spaces for Deep Transformation

This module covers the importance of ritual, and how to create the conditions for experiences of deep transformation.

Context

Rituals have been used by humans for thousands of years, as ways to create meaning out of the things that happen in our lives. We are story and meaning based creatures, this is how we make sense of the world, and how we're able to work together in cooperative societies.

Rituals were created as ways for people to come together, have a shared experience, and create a sense of belonging among tribes.

In our modern western life, most people have lost touch with ritual, and as a result we see a much higher rate of loneliness, suicide, depression, anxiety and apathy, than parts of the world that still participate in ritual regularly as a normal part of their culture.

This then leads to destructive behaviours towards ourselves, each other, and our natural world. Without meaning, there is no reason to care for anything.

But! There are things we can do to revive ritual in the west, and draw upon a rich history of ritual and ceremony within Northern Europe. Celtic traditions, although mostly wiped out through the Roman Empire taking hold and enforcing Catholicism, are still alive today. With a bit of digging and imagination we can find inspiration in these land based practices, and reclaim ritual for ourselves.

More of that in the second spiral. For now we're going to take an indepth look at what a ritual is, and a practical formula for creating spaces for transformation.

So What is a Ritual?

A ritual is to declare an intention to honour something in our lives.

A ritual lifts someone out of their everyday experience, and brings them into a world that exists in a liminal space. It has a clearly marked beginning and end, with some kind of peak experience in the middle that catalyses a shift in the person.

Tools such as drumming, dancing or guided visualisation are often used to bring someone into an altered state of consciousness that is ripe territory for transformation.

Rituals work in the symbolic realm, and thus speak to our subconscious in a way that rational thought cannot. Through embodiment and symbolism we're able to bring about a more real sense of change that helps people to process and integrate whatever the intention of the ritual was.

Types of Ritual

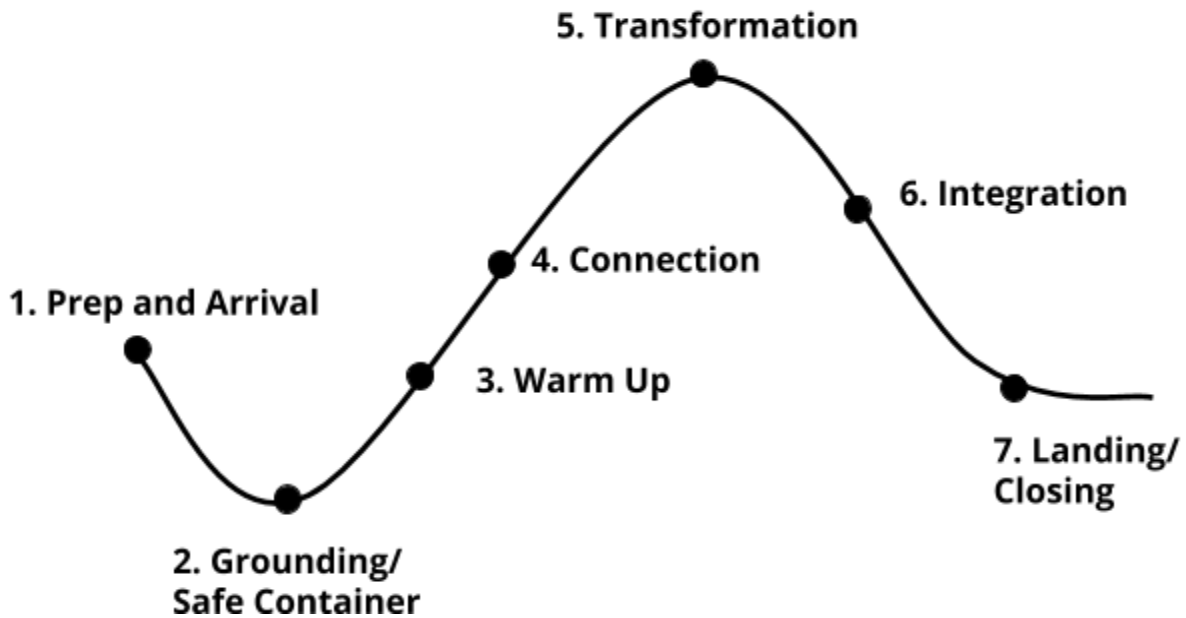
Rituals may be used to mark **major threshold** of a person's life, such as birth, death marriage, or the **passing of time**, such as the 8 Celebrations of The Wheel of the Year, **cycles**, such as lunar or menstrual cycles, or **manifestation magic**, such as a letting go or calling in ritual. We'll cover many of these rituals as we go through the training.

There are many types of rituals and many types of occasion for ritual. I really recommend buying and reading 'Creating Ceremony' by Glennie Kindred. I bought this book 6 years ago, and it was the catalyst for everything that I do now. It is based mostly on Celtic traditions, however it strongly encourages you to be creative and craft your ceremonies in ways that are meaningful for you.

The Arc of Transformation

This is how I do it. It's not always necessary to have all these elements present, but I think the most powerful rituals do.

1. Pre-planning
2. Creating a Safe Container
3. Warm Up
4. Connection
- 5. Transformation**
6. Integration
7. Closing the Container



Pre Planning

Pre planning is everything you need to do before the ceremony starts, which includes:

1. Choose a date, location and theme for your ceremony
2. Invite guests, inform them with any necessary information
3. Will you need any props?
4. What will be the formation? seated or standing/ horse shoe/ dancing etc.
5. music and lighting
6. Assistance (volunteers can be very helpful with helping set the space up and greeting people as they arrive)
7. How do you personally prepare? Ritual clothes, washing, meditation, movement etc.

Creating a Safe Container

A safe container is simply the environment that you create for people to feel comfortable. The purpose of this first section of the workshop is to help people arrive in the space as a group, leave behind the day and to create an atmosphere where people feel safe to open up.

Things to consider:

1. How are people greeted on arrival?
2. Is there gentle music playing?
3. Where do people put their things
4. Giving instruction for what to expect and outlining the structure of the ritual (important to help people relax and have a sense of what is coming next)
5. Include ground rules such as the ones outlined in Sharing Circle 101
6. Using a grounding meditation and check in is also a great way to help people land

Warm Up

The purpose of this section is to help people relax, break the ice and connect to each other in preparation for the 'Transformation'.

Ways to do this:

1. Embodied movement, stretching
2. Partner games
3. Check in
4. Group games
5. Singing
6. Massage

Connection

The Purpose of this section is for people to connect beyond the level of the physical or personality, and touch upon a deeper truth within themselves. This is the second layer of preparation for the 'Transformation'.

Ways to do this:

1. Eye gazing
2. Sharing with a partner or small group something vulnerable, consider a good question that might invite this
3. Breathing together
4. Authentic Relating exercise
5. Trust exercises such as blindfolded journey

Transformation

The purpose of this section is to take people through a moment of transformation, to lift them out of the ordinary, and create a moment that enters the realm of the 'mystical'. Below are a few examples and suggestions to create a mystical experience. They may be used in combination or alone. You may want to spend some time researching other ritual techniques, and invent some of your own.

1. Visualisation Meditation
2. Drum Journey (Sound journey)
3. Dance
4. Fire Release
5. Calling in/ Manifestation

Note: *The role of the witness is a powerful catalyser for the transformative potential of the ritual. When we are witnessed in declaring what is our hearts, or witnessed in moving through something, it becomes more real.*

Always encourage participants to share out loud in the group as sound gives real energy to the act of magic. Of course it's also important to always give people the option not to share if they don't wish to. But it's good to challenge themselves.

Integration

The purpose of integration is to bring everyone back down to Earth. They may be feeling very high, vulnerable, or be a little dazed after the transformation. In this section we will apply the nurturing healing balm to prepare everyone to leave the space. The focus here is on creating a calm and safe environment and give people space to land. This is also the time for people to reflect on their journey and make sense of what happened.

1. Grounding meditation
2. Journaling
3. Sharing circle
4. Nourishing touch
5. Singing/ toning

Closing the Container

The purpose of closing the container is to prepare everyone to go back into the outside world, and to signal a clear end of the ritual.

Ways to do this:

1. Last reflection
2. After care advice
3. 3 oms
4. Group hug
5. One clap all together

So there you have it; The Arc of Transformation. Throughout the rest of this manual and training you'll experience a number of the exercises listed above, as well as instructions for how to lead them.