



Shamanic Journeying Tips

Shamanism is not a religion or a credo, and can be used in conjunction with any spiritual background. It is a process of direct revelation, one in which you are given direct answers to your questions. One of the first scholars to study shamanism, Marcias Eliade, defines the shaman as "one who soul-travels while in an altered state of consciousness, to heal or to gather information from sources unavailable to the normal senses."

You don't have to become a shaman in order to use shamanic practices in your life. Like meditation or other spiritual practices, shamanic journeying can be used to find answers and healing within your own life without the use of a guru, teacher, priest, or other human guide. We are all "hard-wired for the ecstatic", and shamanic journeying can help us achieve this without the use of drugs, alcohol, or other addictive substances. In order to gain access to our deepest states of consciousness, some form of melodic and repetitive sound is usually involved via rattles, whistles, singing, chanting, or drumming.

Shamans, and those who use shamanic practices, have a deep connection with nature and the cycles of life. Shamans today and in the past have also used trance states for ceremonies to mark transitions, to divine the weather, to understand crops, and to determine game locations. Many shamanic practitioners in today's world use the practices for personal healing and healing for others.

One of the most important concepts of shamanism that I have learned and that has comforted me greatly is that you don't need to have an indigenous background or Native American heritage in order to use shamanic practices in your life. You can develop your own relationship to the spirits, discover your own cosmology, and learn your own healing and divination styles.

Three Worlds:

Traditionally, shamans in many cultures speak of three worlds to which they journey in non-ordinary reality. The below lists out some generalities for each world, however there are no set rules, and guides and animals may appear in any world. Many levels also exist within each world, and you may find yourself journeying down (or up) through many different levels. It may be best not to list out too



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much detail for each world, as each person will experience them differently, and there may be much movement between the worlds, even amongst guides and teachers.

Upper world : usually more ethereal, may contain star beings, and full of light. You may find yourself passing through a “fog” or other barrier in order to reach this world. You may also find yourself accessing it via a ladder, vines, or on the wings or back of a power animal. This may be a place where you speak with ancestors, spiritual teachers, ascended masters, or other beings of the stars. [I often receive straight-up education and no-nonsense instructions here, as well as great feelings of peace and love from an ancestor spirit.]

Middle world – fairies, devas, gnomes, and elves may inhabit this world. It is recommended that you are **very, very comfortable journeying to the upper and lower world before going to the middle world**, as the upper and lower world will always have compassionate and helping spirits, however the middle world may contain beings who can be tricksters.

Lower world: This is not a negative place, instead it is earthy (mountains, deserts, jungles, forests, etc.) . May also have gardens, streams, rivers, etc.

Recommended to journey to the lower world first.

You enter into the lower world through a portal in the earth, a cave, climbing down the roots of a tree, or by following an underground stream beneath the earth. It must be something that exists in real life, either from your past or present, but you should be able to clearly see it in your mind.

Some people describe entering this world via a tunnel or even a slide. Beginning journeyers are usually asked to explore the lower world(s) first. This may be where you find your power animal or guide, as well as other helping animal and plant spirits. [I often find help for healing as well as instruction and guidance for herbs, gardens, plants, and animals here.]

Tips for a successful journey: (from the perspective of journeying to the Lower World first)

Always have a clear intention, even if that intention is just to explore a specific world. Also try to phrase the question without the use of “should I” pursue a certain path or decision, perhaps asking instead, “What types of experience will I have if I do X?”

Begin by visualizing a location in nature that you have visited in ordinary reality, and then use that spot to travel down the earth. Sometimes this may be climbing down the roots of a tree, or through a hole, a cave, a body of water, or any other way that you can see yourself going to the center of the earth. This can even be a slide, tunnel, or other form of locomotion.



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Use all of your senses. A journey might not be visual. We as a culture are very used to visual ways of “seeing”, but journeying is seeing with your heart. So be open to smells, words, and other ways of communicating.

Don’t compare to others or to what you’ve read or heard; everyone senses things differently.

Whatever happens on your journey is supposed to happen. There is no “wrong” or “right” in a journey, and if you get lost or lose your way just begin to breathe through your heart and pick up where you left off. Remind yourself again of your intention and come back to where you were in the journey.

You are entirely in control of your journey, and everything is there to support you, no matter how it may appear. Animals that we might normally find uncomfortable (spiders, snakes, etc.) may have lessons to impart, or may even be our spirit animal. (If you see a swarm of insects, though, this may indicate illness.)

Concentration is key. Journeying is somewhere between allowing and guiding – not like a meditation in which you try to clear your mind of thoughts.

Journeying is easiest in total darkness; try using an eye mask or bandanna.

Journeying to your power animal:

Spiritual symbolism of the animal isn’t as important as asking the animal itself who they are to you and what they are for you. You can directly ask the animal what gifts they are bringing you. You may also want to ask your spirit animal if they are open to being shared with others; sometimes they may prefer to be shared only with you.

1. When you first meet your power animal, you can ask, “are you my power animal”?
2. Once you have established contact, you may want to journey in the future just to speak with your power animal, to ask if they would like to dance through you, or to ask what your spirit animal most needs (this may be an offering of some kind.)

Things to know for future journeys:

1. It’s helpful to **create a routine** around journeying. Pick a specific time and place and method.
2. **Power animals and teachers may change over time.**
3. **Be patient and compassionate** with yourself. This practice has no destination or end point or defined outcome. Some days you may have very elaborate journeys and some days not much at all.



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4. You can also **try dancing or singing or free movement** for journeying.
5. **You cannot ask to send healing to someone who hasn't asked for it.**
6. **Always thank your guides and animals.**
7. If you ask a question or direction, **follow through on the advice given.** Don't journey and then not listen to the answers.

Journey Ideas:

- health of the planet
- meeting guides or teachers
- your own health
- healing for your family or community (again, cannot ask for healing for another without their express permission, even your children!)
- connecting with spirits of the garden, lawn, trees, ants, other animals in your living environment
- new job, new house?
- emotional: how can I resolve this situation, what do I need to shift, what is the root cause of this fear, restoring harmony (you can ask what you can do, not what another needs to do)
- meeting ancestors
- creative energies: what do I need in this work/book/project
- ask to connect with seasons, stars, bodies of water
- dancing your power animal (let yourself be loose and just go with it!)
- ask for a ceremony for healing, growth, transition, wedding, death, birth

Is this for real?

As you go forward in journeying, you might begin to ask yourself "Am I making this all up? Is this all a product of my imagination or my subconscious?" It seems that all Westerners question what we see in our journeys, and want to explain or justify the results. My own personal answer to that is that I have seen and discovered too many strange things and insights in my journeying it for it all to be "just" a product of my own mind, but I have also decided that I don't really care. The results I see from journeying – by listening to the insights and direction and then acting upon them – are too amazing to discount. This practice has truly changed my life.

My wish for you:

I hope that you go forward with journeying, opening up to the practice of healing both yourself and our world. As we allow our own light to shine, we open up that space for others.



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