

# **MEDITATIONS WITH NATURE**

**By Misa Hopkins**



# **Meditations with Nature**

**By Misa Hopkins**

Dedicated to the care and feeding of our souls  
through the life and breath of the blue water planet,  
our home and our gift.

Copyright 1999. Third Edition 2012. All rights reserved. Brief quotations only may be used or copied. The author assumes the integrity of the person purchasing this book. If you or anyone you know would benefit from a copy of this book, contact the author and order a copy at [healinghelp at misahopkins dot com](mailto:healinghelp@misahopkins.com).

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter 1    Preparing to Meditate With the Spirits of Nature .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Creating Safe Space	
Taking Care of Your Physical Needs	
Inducing the Meditative State	
Releasing Expectations	
To See or Not to See	
Making an Offering	
Healing and Power	
Playing with the Meditations	
Silence	
Bringing Yourself Out of the Meditative State	
<b>Chapter 2    Beginning with the Breath .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter 3    Meditations with Father Sky .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter 4    Meditations with Mother Earth .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Chapter 5    Meditations with Water .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 6    Meditations with Air .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Chapter 7    Meditations with Fire .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Chapter 8    Meditations with Plants .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Chapter 9    Meditations with Animals .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Chapter 10   Meditations with Stones &amp; Crystals .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Chapter 11   Creating a Medicine Wheel to                 Represent Your Relationship with Nature .....</b>	<b>33</b>

## Introduction

The greatest mysteries of life are right here in front of us, part of us, each and every day. The reason we do not recognize them as mysteries is because we are so busy surviving, we rarely slow down long enough to notice the spirit of life hidden within every living thing.

You do not have to wait for a mystical event to magically occur, though that is certainly a great deal of fun. Hopefully those moments will occur more frequently as you dedicate time and space to simply being in the presence of life. By creating quiet moments of reflection and meditation, you increase the odds you will experience mystical happenings.

In just one still moment, mystery can be realized. Repetitive moments of the same experience evolve the mystery from mystifying to normal. With intent and the willingness to develop your inner senses, you can experience the occasional mystical occurrence into every day events.

There is only one caveat. You must be willing to create time and put effort into becoming still. In the stillness you become witness to the unfolding of life. You begin to see life as if you were watching time-lapse photography, noticing beauty forming itself in each moment of existence. Your inner senses open wide—wide enough to hear the beating wings of a bird, or a bee nibbling on a blade of grass. You will watch plants take in their nourishment from the sun, taste the flavors of the air, smell the scent of animal you can not yet see, and even feel the cells of your body moving through you.

When we grow quiet inside, we can't help but notice our part in the dance of the mystery.
--

As the inner senses open so do your abilities to experience greater levels of awareness—your personal awareness of the Divine. In your stillness, you see visions, hear sacred sounds, feel the sacred pulse, smell and taste worlds forgotten, and sense places beyond your current limitations of experience.

Sacred texts and stories from around the world remind us that sound was the first act of creation. Therefore, if you are willing to attune your ears to the wonders of life, you are sure to remember you are made from one original sound. In mystical awareness, you are likely to recognize the Divine Song and Pulse of the Great Mystery that lives within you and within all of life.

Connecting more deeply with Mother Earth is a lot of fun! There is never any need to strain. She is right there, simply waiting to be noticed, waiting for you to slow down, breathe and take a little time with her.

Our bodies are truly flesh of her flesh. Just as our human bodies are comprised of 75% water, her body is also primarily 75% water. The percentage of salt in the water that flows through our bodies is the same as the percentage of salt in the water on the planet. The minerals we find in our bodies are exactly the same minerals found in the earth, and in approximately the same proportions. And so, as we get to know Mother Earth and the elements that are part of her and interact with her, we are also getting to know ourselves in new and profound ways as we explore the nature of what it means to be part of this earthly experience.

## **Chapter 1    Preparing to Meditate With the Spirits of Nature**

### **Creating Safe Space**

In order to create deep and meaningful experiences, you will find it helpful to attend to your needs for privacy. It is difficult to engage in the depths of stillness when we surround ourselves by multiple distractions, so I recommend creating space where those are at a minimum if at all possible. For example turn off the stereo and the telephone. If you are meditating, you are not answering the phone, so you might as well spare yourself the disturbance of it ringing. I don't recommend meditative music for the exercises in this book because music can mask the sound of nature and this is an opportunity to open all of your senses to the full experience of nature.

If you are living in a metropolitan area, where it is nearly impossible to escape loud noise, then it is probably best to practice meditation in such a way that you allow those sounds to become part of the background. With practice, your senses will become more attuned to nature and less attuned to human-made sounds.

When living with others, you might want to post a note on your door or notify your family or friends that you are taking some private time and need to be left undisturbed for a certain period of time. Unless there is an emergency, it is probably best not to give in to the temptation to respond to any outside interruptions. Your relationship with the Divine nature of the elements is an integral part of your journey in self-awareness and deserves your complete and uninterrupted attention.

### **Taking Care of Your Physical Needs**

For most people, there is a biological state optimum for silent meditation. For example, it can be difficult to sit still for any length of time if you are ravenously hungry or if your stomach is digesting a lot of food. You may find it best to meditate on a stomach that is comfortably content. In the beginning, consider eating lightly an hour or two before meditating. You are likely to find if your stomach is not digesting a heavy meal or starved of nutrition, you will be less distracted. For many people, the more you meditate, the less desire you have to eat.

Many of us find it best not to consume meat, caffeine or sugar before meditating. However, you may want to be fully hydrated or you may find that sipping just a little bit of water before beginning gives your body enough fluids to sustain for a while. Give yourself permission to try out some different eating and drinking habits prior to meditation to discover what works best for your body.

Some people feel too restless to simply sit or lie down to meditate. For these individuals, I often recommend they precede their silent meditation with an active one. Physical activity such as dancing, running, or walking often help people release agitation and pent-up energy in order to feel ready for their bodies and minds to become still.

### **Inducing the Meditative State**

Typically, the closer you are to lying down, the deeper you will go into meditative state; however, you are more likely to go in so deep that you fall asleep. There are those who prefer to lie down with their head, neck and shoulders propped up enough to take them into altered state, while not lying in a typical sleeping position. If you can do this, you may find this position helpful in journeying into profound awareness's.

With sitting meditation you do not tend to fall asleep as easily, but you may find your back tiring before you feel complete your meditation. Some people prefer to sit on the floor with their backs against something firm, cross-legged or with legs stretched out in front of them. If you are familiar with and can sit in a lotus position, by all means do so.

Energy flows through the body better if your spine is erect. However, use good sense here. This is not a ballet class and no one is testing your ability to keep your spine perfectly straight. For now, comfortably erect will be fine. As you become aware of energy flowing through our body and your muscles become stronger, you will naturally increase your ability to remain erect.

Hand positions can become a cue to your subconscious, if you consistently use the same hand position every time you meditate. For example, you might begin by gently laying one hand inside the other, palms up. Try one hand on top for a while and then reverse their positions to understand the different effects they might have for you. If lying with your head raised, you might want to lay your hands, one on top of the other, over your heart.

There is no right or wrong position for your hands or your body I am aware of. Your preference is what makes a position right for you. If you find yourself consistently falling asleep, try a new position—even standing.

Some individuals find it helpful to burn an herb or incense to help them prepare for their meditation. One of the benefits of using a scent is that once used, smelling the scent again creates a powerful clue to the primal center of your brain that it is time to become quiet and still. The scent can actually help you achieve stillness very quickly.

You might also discover there are certain times of day when your inner sense are more open and responsive to the world around you. You may discover that regular meditation times, increases the likelihood of having mystical experiences. By doing so, you are training your mind and body to become open to the full experience of life through your direct attention to time and space.

I recommend experimenting until you find the combination of privacy, food, water, scents, body position, time of day, and regularity that works best for you. By doing so you make your meditation time optimal for deep discoveries.

### **Releasing Expectations**

If you hold expectations that something great has to happen, or decide exactly what you want to experience ahead of time, or determine you must be able to sit still for a very long time—right now—you are probably setting yourself up for disappointment. Meditation, and meditation with the natural elements is a process with many benefits along the way, not to be missed in a rush to get to a predetermined end goal. Meditation is a journey not an end result.

Meditation is similar to taking a trip to meet a friend—the friend being we. Along the way, we will meet many with whom we share relationship and we'll see much scenery. We could, of course, go by without noticing, intent on arriving at our destination. However, if we truly wish to know ourselves—to arrive—our relationships with all living things hold clues along the way. Therefore, it is helpful to notice and observe whatever happens on our journey. Then every experience becomes a great one, full of clues into the mystery of our existence.

### **To See or Not to See**

Some people prefer to meditate with their eyes closed. Others prefer to keep their eyes open, focusing on an object; or if sitting—a spot on the floor. If you focus your eyes on the floor, adjust them up and down until you find an angle that allows your head to remain comfortably upright. When focusing on an element, such as fire, you will need to decide whether focus means with your eyes open and seeing the element or closed, seeing with your inner eyes.

### **Making an Offering**

At the end of several meditations, I suggest offering a prayer of thanks, a song, or some kind of gift to the spirit you have been observing and connecting with. This is a beautiful way to strengthen your relationship with nature. In many ancient and indigenous traditions, it is common to make a gift before asking for help, so if you are using the meditation for your personal benefit, you may want



to consider offering your prayer of gratitude or your gift before you begin. You might offer a bit of tobacco or cornmeal, a cup of water, a flower, a song, or anything that might have meaning along with your appreciation.

We humans do this when we are invited to someone's house for dinner. It is common practice to bring flowers or a bottle of wine before sharing a meal with our host. If you have ever given a gift to your host, you know how expressing gratitude in the beginning is a great way to establish a great relationship.

### **Healing and Power**

Getting to know the elements and nature as they live and breathe within you, as well as getting to know them through external observation, can help you connect more deeply to your innate ability to heal yourself. For example, meditating with a healing herb can teach you a great deal about what you need to do to bring your body into a state of natural balance and health. Discovering qualities you need to incorporate into your process of healing your body, mind, emotions or spirit can come from any and all of nature. Your willingness to be still, watch and listen is all that is needed to gain wisdom for your healing journey.

Personal power and strength, as well as healing, can be gained from insights acquired through meditation with nature. For example, discovering your relationship with vulture could teach you a great deal about your adeptness in cleaning up technical messes at work. Knowing the nature of wolf within you might explain your compelling need to be a part of a family (a pack) of like-hearted, like-minded individuals. A friend of mine who embodied a great deal of mouse nature knew she was very skilled at looking for answers in the small, obscure places that few people ventured into.

The more you are willing to meditate with nature, the more you will learn about your own relationship to the world.

### **Playing with the Meditations**

I encourage you to allow these meditation exercises to become springboards for your own exploration. After all, it is your journey. Divine Spirit is your truest guide. Trust your own inclinations and sensory experiences over anything you read on these pages.

Let Spirit's guidance be the most powerful voice in your journey, and allow these suggested exercises to be just what they are—suggestions that launch you into your own deep relationship with the Divine Essence of nature.

You may find that a meditation from one category, such as Meditations with Father Sky, inspires you to use a similar technique for exploring Mother Earth. I

encourage you to let your imagination and desire inspire variations on these meditations.

### **Silence**

I encourage you to plan enough time for your meditation that you can linger in the silence when the focused meditation is complete. The silence afterwards can bring as much insight or more as the meditation exercise itself. I find it helpful to plan as much time in the silence, without focus, as I spent in the focused aspect of the meditation.

### **Bringing Yourself Out of the Meditative State**

It is important to come out of the meditative state slowly. As my elder taught me, and I have experienced, if you come out too fast you may give yourself a headache. Some people use metaphysical chords and other mechanisms to help you remain attached to your body. Quite honestly, I have found that simply wanting to be in your body is all that is required.

Falling in love with your life here on earth, and particularly, your physical body are pre-requisites for deep or extensive meditative or journey work—especially when you are not being guided by someone. This is particularly challenging when your body is in pain or you are experiencing emotional distress in your every day life. It can feel really good to be out there in the ethers and it is tempting to simply stay out there.

Uncomfortable conditions can and usually do change in time; however, it can be difficult to remember this in the midst of the discomfort. Knowing we have someone or something we care about helps us remember that we came here to experience the mysteries of our daily physical reality, and the gifts of the meditation can actually help us move through difficult conditions with less pain and greater ease.

When facing such temptation, I remind myself that the wonderful feelings of the meditation are mine to bring back into my physical body and emotional state. By giving my cells and my psyche this pleasurable experience, I can help myself remember how to free myself from pain. In my freedom, I will be able to experience the fulfillment that is mine to know here on earth. That is usually all it takes to generate enough will to return.

If you are experiencing physical or emotional pain, you might want to consider developing deeper compassion for yourself before engaging a meditation. One way to do this is to think about some aspect of your life you dearly love or enjoy.

The greater your self-compassion, the further you will feel safe to travel in your meditations.

You might like to try re-entering your conscious awareness through your breath, breathing deeply and exhaling out of your mouth. It can be helpful to take 3 big inhales and exhale through your mouth, with each breath, bringing yourself to consciousness of this physical reality.

You might find it helpful to notice your body against whatever surface it is sitting or reclining. Moving your hands or feet is another way to help anchor your spirit into your body. And be sure to open your eyes slowly as return from your meditation into physical reality. After returning your awareness fully to your body, take your time adjusting.

Before engaging in any significant task that requires you to be fully alert, be sure to give yourself some time to become acclimated to physical reality. You might find it helpful to drink some water or eat something light, or take a walk to help you feel more grounded in your body. Be sure you are fully present and connected to your body before engaging in any activity that requires alert senses, such as driving.

Once you are clear about how you want to return to your body, you are ready to enter meditative states in which you journey to other non-human realities.

## **Chapter 2    Beginning with the Breath**

Consider doing this meditation before you begin a meditation with an element. It will very quickly help you relax and release your thoughts of the day, preparing you to focus and surrender to the experience.

This meditation is available in a guided format on the CD, “Breathing Your Way to Physical Freedom”. You can acquire it by e-mailing [misa@misahopkins.com](mailto:misa@misahopkins.com).

### **Begin by noticing your breath.**

Notice the air flowing through you and caressing you. Notice where it flows easily through your body and where it seems to stop. Do you breathe slowly, quickly, deeply, shallowly? Free yourself from any judgment about how you are breathing. Do not try to change or control it. Simply notice.

### **Breathe from the center of your body to just a few inches outside your body.**

Fill everything with the breath of air. Feel your whole body engage in the process of breathing. As you do this meditation, if any place in your body feels tight and unresponsive, simply wrap those cells in breath, allowing them to absorb breath whenever they are ready.

### **Focus on the lungs and work your way down your body.**

Bring your attention to the top of your lungs, where they attach at the shoulder blades. Breathe into the front of the top of your lungs, then add the sides, then the back.

While still breathing into the upper portion of the lungs, focus into the lower half of your lungs, breathing into the front, sides and back.

Breathe into the solar plexus, while still breathing into your lungs, breathing into the front, sides, and back.

Take the breath further into the area of the digestive organs, breathing once again into the front, sides and back.

Now breathe down into the pelvic bowl, repeating the directional pattern.

Take your awareness down into each section of your legs until you reach the tip of your toes.

### **Once you have reached your toes, travel up the spine to the shoulders.**

Travel your awareness to the base of your spine, and slowly breathe up each vertebra until you have reached the shoulder area.

Breathe into your arms and hands, then return to the shoulders and travel up your spine into the neck and base of the skull, then fill the neck front sides and back.

Last—breathe into the head. Breathe into your mouth, ears, nose, eyes, front, side and back, finishing with the top of your head.

**Breathe into your entire body for several breaths, feeling every cell expand and open as you breathe several breathes.**

Whenever you feel ready, surrender to the breath and allow the breath to breathe you.

**When you are feeling nourished and relaxed, return your awareness to your physical body.**

Once again feel the air moving in and out of your lungs. Take a few deep breaths and exhale through your mouth, blowing the air outward. Feel your body. Feel your body sitting or lying against a surface. Wiggle your fingers or toes and slowly bring your consciousness to a greater state of alertness. When you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

**Or if you are progressing to another meditation, simply shift your awareness from the breath to the next meditation, until you are ready to be fully alert.**

### **Chapter 3    Meditations with Father Sky**

You may find it helpful, if you wish to do open-eye meditation, to keep your eyes, body and mind soft as you do these meditations. Experience with your inner or spirit sense. Of course, you can at any point in the meditation, close your eyes.

I strongly recommend doing these meditations outdoors if you are able. When we aspire, we look upward. When we look for inspiration, we often gaze upward. Use these meditations to connect with the inspiration Father Sky brings to our lives.

#### **Clouds in the Sky**

On a clear and moderately cloudy day, lie down on the ground and look up into the sky. Let your eyes grow soft as you contemplate the clouds. Simply enjoy this quiet relationship for a few minutes. Notice how the clouds dance and reform themselves in the sky.

Whenever you feel ready, feel your spirit and the spirit of a cloud merge together. Feel the cooling mist of the cloud against your skin. Feel the wind blowing you. Listen to its sound—its voice in the sky. Smell the fragrance of the cloud and see its shadows of dark and light.

Feel yourself as light as the cloud. Experience yourself as malleable and as flexible as a cloud. Experience yourself as this constant creator of new forms. Enjoy the feeling of being a cloud.

Whenever you are ready to be finished, tell yourself you will remember the awareness's of this experience. Very gently bring your awareness fully into your body. Through the breath, gently call yourself back to a state of alertness.

#### **Night Sky**

Laying on the ground, looking up at the stars, begin by noticing the Mother Earth beneath you. Feel her solid nature. Allow yourself to envision a root or chord emerging from the base of your root chakra (pelvic bowl). The root or chord travels down through the layers of the earth, deep into the Mother, creating a deep bond between you and the earth.

Now, draw your awareness up into the night sky. Allow your awareness to move upward as you travel beyond the rooftops and trees, higher and higher to the edge of the sphere of oxygen. You can always breathe when you travel

spiritually and so you continue to breathe easily as you begin your journey into space.

Travel onward as you enjoy the view of sparkling planets around you. Immerse yourself in the serenity of the darkness as you float, weightlessly. Listen, feel, see, smell the nature of dark space. Listen to the sound of the planets.

Look back upon the earth. What do you see? What sound do you hear? What do you feel?

Whenever you are ready, tell yourself you may return to your body, remembering these feelings and impressions.

Slowly travel back toward the earth, reaching the layer of oxygen. Travel downward until you see rooftops and/or trees. Travel toward your body.

Very gently bring your awareness fully into your body. Gently call yourself back to a state of alertness.

### **Planetary Visit**

Enter space as you did in the previous meditation.

Now, allow yourself to travel to a planet. You may or may not know its name. Drift in closer to the planet and notice what you see and sense. You float along where ever you are drawn, observing life on this planet. Notice the kind of reality that exists here. Notice how your heart responds to what it experiences here.

Whenever you are ready, tell yourself, you can return to your body with these observations and experiences. Then slowly begin your journey homeward, past the other planets toward the planet earth.

Slowly travel back toward the earth, reaching the layer of oxygen. Travel downward until you see rooftops and/or trees. Travel toward your body.

Very gently bring your awareness fully into your body. Through the breath, gently call yourself back to a state of alertness.

### **Singing to Father Sky**

Whenever you finish a meditation, such as the ones above, feel free to offer a song or prayer of gratitude and appreciation to the element you have journeyed into. By acknowledging the gifts and insights we are receiving, we are establishing a relationship with this wonderful, unique aspect or nature of the Divine.

## **Chapter 4    Meditations with Mother Earth**

You may find it helpful to keep your eyes, body, and mind soft as you do your meditations. Use your senses within, rather than your outer senses. I recommend doing these meditations outdoors if you are able, perhaps lying directly on the ground or a blanket.

Everything has a pulse and a song. We are all part of the very first pulse and sound of creation from Divine Essence. Therefore, even Mother Earth has a heartbeat, a breath, and a song. She is, after all, a living organism with whom we share our existence. The minerals we find in her are the same minerals in us. We are flesh of her flesh.

### **Heart Beat of Mother Earth**

Do this meditation as often as you are called to do it. Be without expectation. You may hear and feel the heartbeat the first time or on another occasion. Whenever you experience it is exactly the right time for you.

Lie face down on the ground. (If this is uncomfortable, by all means, lie face up or in a position that works for you.)

Listen to and feel your own heart beat for a while. Notice its subtle qualities. Enjoy it. Feel this rhythm, initiated by your heart, pulsing through your whole body.

When you have felt as much as you want, allow your focus to gently, naturally change. Become aware of Mother Earth. In a soft and open state, allow your mind to be as quiet as possible, while your inner senses remain tenderly alive. In this open manner, listen for the heart beat of Mother Earth.

If you fall asleep while meditating, be kind to yourself. Enjoy the waking state and recall your attention to the heartbeat. The waking state is a marvelous place between the sleeping dream world and our fully alert reality. In this state, awareness can be profound, so give yourself permission to ride on the edge of conscious awareness as you drift between these two states.

When you have heard or felt her heart beat, give thanks, and give yourself permission to linger in the silence without focus. Then breathe your way out of the meditation state.



### **Song of Mother Earth**

Once again, free yourself of expectation. Choose to do this meditation for the pleasure of growing still with the earth, regardless of what you do or do not experience. Do it as often as you are inspired.

Lie face down on the ground (or in a position that is comfortable for you).

Once again, give yourself permission to enter into a soft state, allowing your mind to be as quiet as possible, and your senses gently alive.

If you would like, connect to her pulse, her rhythm, feeling it inside you. Then listen. You may hear little. You may hear many sounds. If you hear sounds, listen until a constant sound or melody emerges.

If you would like, hum it with her. Of course, it is equally wonderful to listen without joining in.

### **Optional Method**

Lie facing up.

Take your awareness up into the darkness beyond the atmosphere as you would in the Father Sky meditation.

Once you are in space, turn around and look back on Mother Earth. Watch her and listen for her song.

When you have heard her song, give thanks. Linger in the silence and take in the experience fully. Then breathe your way out of the meditative state.

### **The Breath of Mother Earth**

Once you have heard her heart beat and her song, you may want to experience her breath. Remember, the earth is a huge organism in comparison to the human. Her breathing capacity is quite different from ours, taking greater time.

Follow the same steps as previous earth meditations as you lie on the ground. Simply attend to her breath, rather than her heartbeat or song.

Follow the usual steps to breathe yourself out of the meditative state and into full consciousness of your every-day reality.

**Singing to Mother Earth**

Whenever you connect with the Mother or her children in an intimate way, it is meaningful and appropriate to offer some form of gratitude. It is important to give as well as receive from our sacred Mother. Many people, whose spiritual practice is based in Native American tradition, offer corn meal or tobacco as a gift. A song is equally meaningful. If you don't know a song, simply hum a tune from your heart with a feeling of gratitude and appreciation.

## Chapter 5    Meditations with Water

Water is fundamental to all life on earth. Seventy to eighty percent of our bodies are comprised of water. Approximately seventy percent of the earth is also comprised of water. The water of the oceans is about 70% salt, as is the fluid in our bodies. The human body is blood of her blood. This awareness can help us access our deep connection to water.

As with the earth meditations, do these meditations as often as you are inspired. Release any preconceived ideas about the end result. Be without expectation, allowing yourself to be fully in the experience of the moment. Allow your unique sacred experience to unfold itself within you.

In these meditations, ride the waves of your awareness to greater depths of understanding and consciousness. Like the water of the planet, we ebb and flow to primal rhythms deeply beneath our every-day awareness.

### **Ebb and Flow**

Find a natural body of water to sit near. This can be a lake, river, creek, ocean; any natural body of water in which you can observe its ebb and flow. Find a comfortable place to be and a comfortable sitting position. Choose a spot where you are not likely to be disturbed by other people.

As with other meditations, you may find it helpful to prepare for this meditation with the Breathing Meditation before you begin your focus with the water.

Observe the water with soft eyes for a while. Notice its movement. Notice its rhythm—its pulse. Is the rhythm consistent or does it change? Is the movement strong or delicate? Is the tempo fast or slow?

With eyes closed or open, allow yourself to listen to the sounds of the water. Listen to its tempo, volume, and rhythm. Notice the consistencies and the variations of both rhythms and sounds.

Now, imagine you are the water you are observing. Allow your body to rock or sway to its ebb and flow. Find one major rhythm and stay with it. Continue until the sway becomes a natural, easy movement. Notice how you feel physically as you ebb and flow with the water.

Then notice how you are feeling emotionally. What emotion(s) is rising to the surface? With time, do your emotions change as you linger in the ebb and flow?

Gradually, decrease your physical movement and draw your focus inward. Feel the inside of your body swaying to the rhythm of the water. The water inside you and the water outside of you are dancing together in one movement of energy. Notice how natural this feels.

After you have been present with the internal dance for a while, give yourself permission to linger in the silence without focus. Whenever you are ready, breathe your way out of the meditative state, giving thanks for your experience.

### **Optional Method**

At a later date, you may want to do this as a walking meditation, as you hike around a lake, next to a stream, or along a beach.

### **Spirit of the Water**

This meditation can be done indoors or outdoors. You will need a bowl made out of a material such as glass, pottery, wood or ceramic (no metal, pewter or plastic). Fill it with drinkable water.

The essence of life, we call Spirit, can be experienced through our inner or spiritual senses—our spiritual eyes, ears, nose, mouth and skin. With practice and focused attention, we experience the mystery of Spirit as it exists in all of life.

You may want to prepare with the Breathing Meditation.

In a quiet place, and sitting in a comfortable position with the bowl in your hands, take a sip of the water. Taste the water and feel it slide through your body.

Now, soften your eyes so they are slightly out of focus, and observe the water for a while. With your eyes still soft, and still observing the water, look beyond it. Look beyond what you normally see. In this state of observance, you may see the spirit of the water.

When you are ready, sing to the water. Do not worry about what or how you are singing. Simply allow your heart to hum or sing whatever it wishes—a familiar song or something you have never heard before. Sing to the essence or the spirit of the water. Notice how the spirit manifests or presents itself to you. Take your time with this exercise and enjoy the process.

Now drink the water again. Can you taste the difference? Water whose essence or spirit has been recognized and blessed often tastes better to us.

When you are finished, give thanks and linger in the silence without focus. Whenever you are ready, breathe your way out of the meditative state.

## **Chapter 6    Meditations with Air**

As with the other meditations, release yourself from expectation. Do them as often as you are inspired and find safe space for your meditation time.

Breathe consciously before you enter into the meditations. Breathing with focused attention will deepen your experience of the air.

Air stimulates life. The very first breath we take outside of the womb is the beginning of our individual experience of life; when we take our last breath, we release our spirits from our experience here on earth. As long as there is air for us to breathe, our bodies and minds are stimulated to experience our human condition.

### **Sensing the Wind**

Find a quiet place to sit outdoors.

Observe the wind. Notice how nature responds to the activity of the wind. Notice the plants, ground, and water, anything that might be moving in relationship to the wind. At what velocity is the wind blowing? From which direction is the wind blowing? Does it change direction? What is the rhythm of the wind? How does it sound as it moves across the landscape?

Now notice how the wind feels to you. What is its temperature? Does the temperature change? How does it smell? Does it have a taste? Feel the different textures of the wind.

Grow very still inside—as quiet as you can become. Notice the direction from which the wind most consistently blows. What does this direction signify to you?

Allow yourself to become physically very still. Notice your thoughts. As your thoughts change, what happens to the wind? As the wind changes, what happens to your thoughts?

Feel the wind blow around you. Then, allow yourself to experience the wind blowing through your body. You are not as solid as you might think. What does it feel like to experience the cleansing, stimulating power of the wind?

Give thanks. Linger in the silence for a while, then breathe your way out of the meditative state.

## **Colors of the Air**

This meditation can be done outdoors on a very still day or indoors. Walk about, noticing the air as you did the wind in the last meditation. You might begin by focusing on impressions your hands or face are receiving, and eventually notice your whole body as an instrument of sensation.

Be particularly sensitive to the subtle changes of temperature and smells as you walk from place to place. Notice the currents of air as you step through them. Observe the changes in texture as you move about.

Soften your eyes, making them slightly out of focus and give yourself permission to see the tiniest particles of dust that float in the air. Look beyond what you usually see and observe the patterns of shadows and light in the air, or perhaps you will notice the movement of spirits. You may even see soft hues of color.

If indoors, you may want to become still for a while and then focus your eyes on a white wall. This can be an excellent backdrop for observing the currents and colors of air.

Notice your thoughts. How does the air change in relationship to your thoughts? How do your thoughts change in relationship to the air?

Enjoy the experience for whatever it brings to you. Give thanks. Linger in the silence for a while, then breathe your way out of the meditative state.

If you find yourself beginning to doubt what you are experiencing, relax. Many of us doubt initially. I encourage you to hold the possibility that whatever you experience is real in some way, though perhaps not yet completely understood. Allow the desire to understand to carry you into deeper explorations.

If you have experienced little in this meditation, relax. These are subtle realities you are exploring. Time and practice may be required to develop your sensitivities.

## **Chapter 7    Meditations with Fire**

You will need quiet places for these exercises. If you do them more than once, they will become a practice through which you can witness the changes in your perceptions of the world. Remain open minded in these meditations as you engage in a conscious dance between yourself and the fire.

Fire inspires us. In fire, we witness passion's strong desire to live, willing to constantly change its form in order to survive. Simultaneously, fire dramatically and quickly transforms the very nature of whatever it touches. Through the following meditations, you will have an opportunity to get to know the fire, the electrical charge that burns inside of you.

### **Getting to Know the Sun**

Find a quiet place at dusk or sunrise and spend an hour or two being with the movement of the sun.

There is no magic formula for this meditation. Giving yourself permission to actually spend time sitting and being with the sun for a while may be the biggest challenge to overcome.

Sun gazing at sunrise or sunset is a time-honored event. At this time of day, the sun tends to be less intense, so you can actually watch the sun without shielding your eyes. Notice the peace, energy and tranquility you experience as you honor the sun and let its magic weave its way into you.

You might want to make a picnic dinner or breakfast to enjoy while you gaze at the sun moving across the horizon. Or perhaps a cup of tea is all you need, if anything, to help you become inspired to get to know the sun.

### **Optional Method**

If you need to commit less time, consider getting up early and greeting the sun in the morning or taking some time at dusk to kiss the sun goodnight.

### **Creating and Observing Fire**

Find a place outdoors where you can safely and legally burn a small fire, while enjoying enough privacy for meditation.

Build a small fire out of natural materials, such as paper, moss, leaves and wood. Begin your fire with paper or moss and small sticks and dry leaves, adding larger and larger pieces of dry wood as the fire takes off. Make sure enough air flows through your pieces of wood to keep the fire burning.

Be aware of your thoughts as you build the fire. Notice the wind's response to your thoughts. Notice how much effort is required to light the fire and keep it burning.

Allow your inner, spiritual sense to grow keen. Imagine the fire as a dance partner, and the fire is leading this dance. It is your job to follow, placing the wood in the right place or giving a puff of air in the right spot at the right time. Listen to the fire. Listen to your gut feelings—those moments of inner knowing that seem to tell you, “Now, put a piece of wood right there.”

Do not confuse listening to the fire with logically figuring out the best way to keep the fire burning. Make an act of faith with your inner senses. This meditation is about listening to the language of the fire. Keep your energy soft, and your focus on the desire of the fire.

When you know you are in a dance with the fire, sit back and enjoy its essence for a while. Listen to its variety of sounds, temperatures, rhythms, colors, and moods. Look at it with soft eyes and witness the waves of energy coming from the fire. Look past the fire with your soft eyes, allowing the spirit of the fire to become known to you.

As the fire goes out, observe it in its transition from flames to embers. You might want to consider how this fire is like you. If it could tell a story about you as a dance partner, what would it say?

Give thanks. Linger in the silence for a while, then breathe your way out of the meditative state.

### **Observing the Flame of a Candle**

This meditation can be done indoors or outdoors. You need a candle that will burn safely for some time. If you use a tapered candle, make sure it is in a secure holder with something underneath to catch any drips, so that you won't be distracted in the middle of the meditation. It is best if you do not have to stop in the middle of the meditation to physically tend to the candle.

Before you light the candle, determine a comfortable place and position in which to sit. The candle should be placed at a comfortable viewing distance from you at eye level (or a comfortable level for you to observe the flame).



Light the candle and with soft eyes, observe it. Notice its rhythms, sounds, heights and colors in relationship to the movement of air. Notice the air and its movement in relationship to the flame.

Move your body to the rhythm of the flame. Breathe with the flame. After you feel you know its pulse, grow still and silent inside. Notice your thoughts. Notice the rhythm, sound, height and color of the flame in relationship to your thoughts.

Notice your feelings and passions. Notice the rhythm, sound, height and color of the flame in relationship to your passions.

How is the flame a reflection of you? How are you a reflection of the flame?

When you and flame have become reflections of each other, enjoy this awareness for a while. Then give thanks. Linger in the silence, then breathe your way out of the meditative state.

## **Chapter 8    Meditations with Plants and Trees**

### **Plants and Trees of the Mother**

This exercise can be done outdoors with a plant or indoors with a houseplant. Be sure to maintain your focus with one plant. You may choose a bush, herb or flowering plant. Over time you may want to repeat this meditation with a variety of plants.

If you find a certain plant or flower consistently calls to you, you may have some of its nature in you. You might enjoy spending some extra time with this plant, getting to know it more deeply in order to better understand yourself as you relate to the world.

Select a plant for this meditation. You might want to begin by soft focusing your eyes and observing the plant for a while. Notice the energy of the plant.

Notice its relationship to nature, and allow yourself to become like the plant, sensing its movements. How does it respond to the wind, for example? Can you sense it reaching upward to the sun? Can you feel it transforming sunlight into nourishment?

You might even want to dance with the plant, swaying to the wind, reaching toward the sun, stretching your feet deep into the soil like roots.

Soften your eyes and look slightly past the plant. Ask to meet the spirit of the plant and notice what comes to your awareness.

Listen to the heartbeat, breath and song of the plant. Feel your energy in relationship to the plant. If the bond is very close, this might be a plant that is a part of your personal medicine wheel.

Ask the spirit of the plant what insights it has for you.

Before leaving this meditation, consider offering a song to the plant or tree for sharing this intimate time with you.

### **Tree Spirit**

Follow the same steps as the previous plant meditation, only you may want to sit in front of the tree or with your back against it. If you are repeatedly drawn to a particular kind of tree, you may share some of its nature. Getting to know the tree intimately may give you some clues about your own innate nature.

You may wish to add this step, if you sit with your back against the tree. Feel yourself merge with the tree. Feel the energy flowing up and down through the tree. Then feel the energy flowing up and down your spine.

You might also want to stand and reach your arms up and out, like branches of a tree. Let yourself sway to the wind in the same way a tree's branches naturally respond to the pulse of the wind.

Ask the spirit of the tree to impart any insights that might be helpful to you. Listen carefully. Though many trees have forgotten their ability to communicate with humans, you may find one that will be open if you are willing to hear.

Give thanks. Linger in the silence for a while, then breathe your way out of the meditative state.

### **Listening to the Forest, Meadow or Any Other Expanse of Plants**

Just like every individual human or plant has its own unique signature sounds and rhythm, so do areas of a forest or meadow, for example. By slowing down and tuning in, we can experience the music and colors and feelings of nature.

For the purposes of simplification, I will refer to this meditation space as a forest, but you may choose to be sitting on marsh land, the middle of the desert or any place else where plants live.

Find a quiet place in an area to sit outside.

Begin by quieting your mind and body until you are still and present with your surroundings.

Cup your hands gently over your eyes and your thumbs over your ears. For a few minutes you will deprive some of your senses. Begin humming one sound for a couple of minutes. When you finish release your hands and thumbs and sit quietly with your eyes closed. Give yourself permission to notice the sounds of the plants around you.

Whenever you are ready, open your eyes and gaze at the plants with soft eyes. Give yourself permission to notice their energy and life force. Open your inner ears and listen to the sounds beneath the obvious sounds of the forest.

Now feel yourself as one of the plants you have been observing with your inner eyes and inner ears. Feel yourself as a plant of the forest, or desert or wherever you are. Become one of the sounds, colors, energies and textures of the woods.

When you feel complete, give thanks. Linger in the silence for a while, then breathe your way out of the meditative state.

## **Chapter 9    Meditations with Animals**

A friend of mine, visiting our home, spent each morning sitting on the deck quietly soaking in some sun. Apparently, her nature and the nature of the deer in the area were akin, because first one, two, then three deer came out each morning and laid down just a mere three to five feet from our deck to be with her in her meditation. When she left our home, the deer walked through our yard, but rarely lingered as they had so consistently with her.

I was holding a seven day ceremony in an area where there were many butterflies in the area, and we all enjoyed watching them wing past us. One young man in the camp had a wonderful serenity about him. We marveled at how butterflies would land on him as if they were stopping by for a visit.

These are just a couple of the many stories I could share with you about animals' relationships with people. Even seemingly dangerous animals seem to know when they are safe with a human and will choose to live harmoniously with us, if we welcome that relationship.

Through these meditations, you may discover one of your power animals—an animal whose nature is very much akin to your own. Knowing and embracing your power animals can give you some insight about your perspectives and behaviors in relationship to other people, your natural strengths and the way you approach challenges in your life.

### **Observing Animals**

Like the friend I mentioned above, animals sometimes draw near when they feel safe and feel a kinship with you. You don't have to do anything. If you prefer, simply meditate quietly outdoors with your attention on quieting your mind. It could be interesting to see who comes to join you. Keep in mind animals are likely to come near you when you least expect it. If no one comes, then give thanks for your time alone with nature.

Find a quiet place outdoors, or from a house if the house has nice picture windows looking out on natural landscape.

Breathe yourself into a still and quiet state of body and mind.

Observe your surroundings and appreciate what you observe. You are not looking for animals, you are simply noticing them if they pass by. Use your time to enjoy nature and enjoy the stillness.

Allow yourself to hear the subtle sounds of the animals. Enjoy the unique pitches and textures of their sounds.

Allow your eyes to take you to any movement around you, whether that means you are looking down at the earth or up into the trees. Watch the movement of the wildlife.

Allow yourself to be curious about the wildlife around you, whether you are watching birds or squirrels or ants. Wonder about their world and through your observations get to know them.

You might focus on only one animal. You might let your attention to be drawn to different ones.

The closer they come to you, the quieter and more receptive you want your mind to be. If you hope they will come closer or get excited, they may become disturbed by your influx of energy and move further away. Gently, hold space for them to be near if they choose. Simply appreciate them. Appreciation is often attractive energy to most species.

Whenever you are ready, give thanks. Linger in the silence for a while, then breathe your way out of the meditative state.

### **Discovering A Power Animal**

Do this exercise as often as you wish to connect with the animal spirits inside of you. You might find you are consistently the same animal for some time. This might be a very strong power animal within you or you may need something about the nature of this animal in your human life right now.

You might find that you become a couple of animals in one meditation. However they come to you, at whatever rate, honor their nature within you and the bond you share.

Find a quiet place to sit outdoors. Notice where you have chose to be. Are you in the deep woods, an open meadow, huddled under a rock, in a cave, or near the water? There is some reason you are comfortable here.

Take your mind and body to a quiet, tranquil state.

Being with the desire to know one of your power animals, allow your inner sense to open as you sit quietly.

Feel your body shifting. See yourself with your inner eye. Allow images, scents, feelings, and sounds to come to you. Trust what comes.

Allow your body and the edges of your mind to experience animals that is coming forth from your subconscious. Allow the images and senses to become clearer, little by little, until you have a sense of running, flying, swimming, etc.

Allow your inner sense to notice the shape of your body, its strength, its nature. Do you sense fur, feathers, scales? What color are you? What is the shape of your head? What do you desire as this animal?

Invite your inner eye to see others like you around you. Give yourself permission to look at yourself in a pool of water in this dream-like inner space. Most of all let your inner senses guide you to a deep awareness about your animal nature.

When you feel complete, give thanks. Linger in the silence for a while, then breathe your way out of the meditative state.

## **Chapter 10 Meditations with Stones & Crystals**

Of all life on the planet, stones and crystals have been here the longest. Stones and crystals have a life force of their own that is unmistakable once you have opened to their energy. If you want to connect with a powerful sense of stability, history, and constancy, stones and crystals have a great deal to offer.

### **Being With a Stone**

You may want to do this exercise by holding a stone, or if you prefer, sitting on or against a large stone. I recommend you begin with a garden-variety rock or two and later do this meditation with a gemstone. Every stone has its own unique energy signature. After all of the other meditations you have done from this booklet, by now your sensitivity should be sufficient to experience the signatures of different varieties of rocks.

It is good to clean a gemstone that has been owned or held by someone else before you meditate with it. Most stones can be soaked in salt water for several days. However, if the name of the stone ends in “ite” as in sulfite, fluorite, etc., I recommend you smudge it with sage or bury it in the ground for several days. Saltwater tends to erode these particular stones very quickly. Cleansing is important to do with stones that have been handled a lot because these cleansing techniques help discharge energy that is not natural to the stone.

Hold a stone, or sit on or sit against a rock. Begin by admiring its natural beauty and formation. Feel the solidity of the rock.

Breathe yourself in to a quiet meditative state.

Slowly, let yourself sink into the essence of the rock. Notice, feel, listen, observe the nature of the rock. How do you feel as you experience the nature of the rock?

Ask the stone for insights and wisdom that would be helpful to you. Notice images and sounds moving through your mind. What is the rock showing or telling you? What stories might it be telling you? What impressions is it imparting?

When you feel complete, give thanks. Linger in the silence for a while, then breathe your way out of the meditative state.



### **Being With a CrystalCrystal Wright**

You might enjoy meditating with a clear quartz crystal first. Later try other quartz crystals and note your impressions of their differences and unique qualities. Crystals tend to have a higher vibrational frequency than stone, so make sure you are well connected to the earth before you begin a crystal meditation.

Before you begin meditating with the crystal, I recommend the same cleansing procedures as you used for your gemstones.

Begin by holding the crystal lightly in your hand and enjoying its beauty and unique features.

Allow your mind to grow quiet and still as you gaze with soft eyes at the crystal. Notice the field of energy around it.

Slowly turn the crystal as you honor the spirit of the crystal in your hand. Your eyes and consciousness should take you to a spot on the crystal that feels like a doorway or window.

Let your awareness sink into the crystal through the window or doorway. Slowly close your eyes and allow your awareness to take you fully inside. Notice the crystal from the perspective of being inside it. Let your consciousness move about the inside of the crystal and enjoy its internal nature and structure.

Ask to meet the spirit of the crystal. Trust your inner sense as you watch, listen and feel the impressions that are coming. Along with meeting the spirit you might hear its song if you listen with your inner ears.

Ask the spirit of the crystal to give you any message or insight that might be pertinent to your life now.

When you have received the message, give thanks. Linger in the silence for a while, then move your consciousness back through the door or window into the outside world and breathe your way out of the meditative state.

## **Chapter 11 Creating a Medicine Wheel to Represent Your Relationship with Nature**

Many traditions around the world honor their relationship with nature through the creation of a medicine wheel. Medicine wheels are as varied as the number of cultures that use them, but they are consistent in acknowledging a great circle of life that includes the aspects of nature, as we know it on this planet.

You may want to consider creating your own medicine wheel for your personal use. You may find a wheel from a culture or spiritual tradition that fits your relationship with nature. Even if you use a cultural wheel, you may find it beneficial to create your own unique wheel that tells more of your personal story.

You can make a medicine wheel out of cloth, wood, stones, paper and pen—whatever appeals to you. Just remember, the wheel represents your life, so it is wise to treat it with respect as you make it and when it is complete.

I once met a woman who made a personal medicine wheel outdoors for a class she was taking. She uses stones, sticks, and shells and such to create her personal wheel. She was instructed to tend to it regularly over several days. One day, at lunch, she shared with me she had woken up confused and disoriented. She dressed and went down outside to her medicine wheel to discover that an animal had walked through it, moving things around. The wind, it seemed, had been blowing pretty hard and moved a few other items out of place as well. When she put her wheel back into its proper order, she felt significantly better.

It is wise to never underestimate the power of a sacred object when we make it, and the medicine wheel is sacred. If you decide to make one, and I encourage you to do so, be sure you keep it in a safe place, away from potential harm.

As you discover your relationship to earth, water, wind and fire, to the plants, animals and stones you can add representations of them to your wheel. You may sit down and make it all at once, or it may be a process of unfolding that takes many years.

In creating the wheel, very likely your dreams and visions will speak to you about relationships that may not have been apparent to you yet. Animals, stones and plants will find their way into your life so you will have the opportunity to discover they are a part of you and your wheel.

Remember, the knowledge that comes to you when your mind is still and open will be the truest knowledge about your relationship to the elements. If you try to

figure out your relationships, they will not be a true representation of you. You can fool yourself with your mind, but your heart and spirit know the truth.

Remember to open your senses, ask what you would like to know, and trust the quiet impressions that come to you from your meditative states. Most of all enjoy the process and the journey of discovery as you uncover your unique and wonderful relationship with nature.

## **Chapter 12 Your Relationship with Nature**

Scientists tell us that our DNA is almost identical to life here on planet earth. There are minute differences between a tree and you or a monkey and you. We are made up of the same molecules, just put together differently.

Mystically, the awareness of this inter-relationship has been explained in the tree of life. Many of my Native brothers and sisters called this, “All my relations.”

We are not as separate as we might think. And that can become a source of strength, conscious awakening and healing, or medicine as my Native elders would have called it.

When you become consciously aware of this relationship, nature responds. It has been my experience that many of the “lower” conscious creatures already know this. But we humans—at least most of us—have forgotten.

By choosing to stimulate this awareness in you, you are opening up to the gifts of nature at a deeper level. You are honoring the spirit that lives within them. Their spirits and your spirit know that ultimately we have all come from the same Source, and we are here for each other in the grand experience we call living on, and hopefully—with, Mother Earth.