



Ritual in support of grief.

“Ritual enables us to live a life that is much closer to what our souls aspire to...Ritual links humans to the gods or God. We enter into ritual in order to respond to the call of the Soul”.

(Malidoma Patrice Some – Ritual: Power, Healing and Community).

Ritual offers:

- A means for community building through shared experience.
- A powerful way to transport us out of our everyday way of being.
- A pathway for connecting more deeply with ourselves & our souls.
- Connection to the ‘more than human world’ including a spiritual connection with our loved one’s passed.
- The healing processing of emotion in an embodied way (through use of more of our senses).
- A container for expression/processing of emotion that we can move in and out of.

Performing Ritual:

- 1) **Prepare** – have a time, place and a rough plan/structure for the ritual and gather resources needed, i.e. the symbolic elements – candles, photos, prayers, poems, music, clothing.
- 2) **Intention & Performing the ritual** – The aim is for the ritual to be different to our everyday way of doing things and being. Have an intention for the ritual. What is the purpose, is it to share our experience in the witness of others/nature, to deeply feel our pain and/or love, to farewell and let go, to cleanse, to shift from one stage of mourning into another stage, to remember with reverence & honour our loved one etc. It is encouraged to welcome the support of the earth, spirit and/or friends & family as witnesses and holders of the ritual.
- 3) **Return – finish.** With a clear finish we can then fully step out of the ritual and the altered way of being. We often give thanks to the earth/spirit/friends & family for supporting, witnessing and holding space for us throughout the ritual.

“Purpose is the driving force that contributes to the effectiveness of ritual (Some)”

Ritual examples:

- Creation of alters
- **Marking of the years** with an item such as a rock placed at an altar in nature somewhere.
- **Cleansing a space**- can wash the walls and ceilings in spaces our loved ones inhabited, looking to cleanse and prepare the space for renewal. Could incorporate music, a mantra while washing the walls, burning incense, sage or essential oils. This could be done more than once. I have effectively prepared a room for embracing the new by washing the walls for 7 days in a row at the same time wearing the same outfit, changing at the end each time. Then offering a prayer/speaking an intention for the room going forward and bringing in something that represents ‘new life’ into the space at the end of the process is also useful, some flowers, a picture etc.



-
- **Having a place and time to play a piece of music** which reminds us of the person and/or evokes our emotional bodies – our sadness our grief, our anger etc. Set up a safe place that is uninterrupted and in which you won't feel self-conscious and play this music, allow it to move you and really let go. At the end stop the music. Offer thanks of some kind and step out of this space. Maybe go have a shower or go for a walk, change your clothes – you are marking the end of the ceremony.
 - **Cutting ties and cords to those deceased.** Here a prepared knife is used, take time to make the knife sacred in some way, either by binding the handle with cord, blessing it in some way. I have a ceremonial knife that is only used in ritual and ceremony. So, if you are using an everyday knife, awaken it some how with a blessing or symbolically dressing it up.
 - **Write a farewell letter and burn it.** Reading the letter out loud before burning it can be supportive. What is the intention for this, is it to let go of an aspect of our grief/relationship to the deceased.
 - **Creating an effigy** (an image or representation of a person) can be made from natural items and even include something of them within it (an item of jewellery, ribbon, sample from clothing etc). Then go out into nature and lay it to rest. If compelled it can also be buried.
 - **Speaking from the heart:** This can be done solo or in a group. Have an object that you hold while talking. When holding the object each person is invited to speak from their heart, really feel into the heart and speak from this place. No advice or comments are welcome here only a gesture of recognition for what has been spoken. Then pass the object to the next person. If doing this solo, ensure to speak out loud, this can be done outside.
 - **Crying tears into the earth:** A hole is dug and participants lie on their stomachs, speaking and crying into the hole. We offer our grief to the earth. The hole is then filled in. A full description of this can be found in (Weller, 2015).
 - **Walk a labyrinth** – again you can set an intention to walk into the centre with, carry something with you and leave it in the centre of the labyrinth then walking out without it or just being open to feeling what comes. Visit: <https://labyrinthlocator.com/>

“What I have discovered in grief rituals over many years is that we feel relief when we finally are able to acknowledge our pain with one another. We can also share our grief with a tree of a riverbank, in writing or in clay. We can dance our grief or express it through music. The main thing is to welcome it and grant it a place in our lives. When we do, we become larger, and we can sense our intimate bond with all creation” (Francis Weller – The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief).

Remember – there is no right and wrong way with ritual. It just has to come from the heart, with an intention and if it feels right, asking for support from the spiritual world and/or natural world. Be creative. Prepared humbly with blessings and love, Eliza-Beth xx