

This is an outline of the web post “Creating and Experiencing Meaningful Personal Ceremony” by Glenda Taylor on this website OneAndAllWisdom.com; that post is a transcript of Glenda’s remarks at a weekend workshop on the subject. I suggest you read that web post first. This is an outline created from the notes a participant took at the workshop.

- I. Why do we have ceremony? What is the purpose of ceremony?
 - A. To invoke or evoke aid or guidance or energy or actions to facilitate a specific intention.
- II. What sort of intentions require ceremony? Two kinds.
 - A. Ceremony is needed to renew or restore.
 1. To restore balance when there is imbalance.
 2. To restore harmony where there is disharmony.
 3. To restore health when there is illness.
 4. To restore purity after defilement.
 5. To renew or rebirth, i.e. to begin again, to leave behind the past and start over.
 6. To return to one’s origins to reclaim a lost possibility or purpose.
 - B. Ceremony is needed or reorient or to change.
 1. To move from one stage to another; as in from single to married, from one job to another.
 2. To foster change in the outer environment.

Notes concerning the purpose of ceremony:

Always determine the purpose of a ceremony. Whether you are the person planning it, or the person asked to participate. Be specific, even if the purpose is broad—like healing the world—know the purpose. Know the purpose of the ceremony *before* you get involved in it in any way so that your conscious intent can be set, so that your safeguards can be activated, so that you can add to the ceremony and not be a drain on it. You have a *right* to know. Though some Native American writers have indicated that “whites” ask too many questions, they would never expect you to enter into ceremony without knowing its purpose or even what is going to happen to achieve that purpose. You have the *responsibility* to know.

- III. What is ceremony?
 - A. An energy shift, an energy transaction, an exchange of energy.
 1. A shift within oneself. This includes body, mind, emotions. This means you must know yourself, and preferably have a conscious relationship between all of your parts so that when they shift you’ll know what’s happening where, etc.
 2. A shift or transaction or exchange of energy with all the other individuals involved in the ceremony.

3. A shift or exchange of energy with all of nature, with the elements, etc.
 4. A shift or exchange of energy with “All My Relations,” with all that is, with God, Source, Force, Great Spirit...
- B. Ceremony is a funnel or channel for Energy. Energy flows, moves. Energy flows both ways.
1. Some ceremonies have as their *intention* that the energies flow toward the participants as in a personal physical healing.
 2. Some ceremonies have as the *intention* that the energies flow outward from the participants, as in the healing of the planet or of someone far away.
 3. It is important to remember that in all ceremonies, the energies flow both ways. *All energy is a magnet for energy to be drawn to it, and all ceremony radiates out energy* to the surrounding environment or anyone remotely attuned or connected to the substance of the ceremony.
 4. Set your intentions for ceremony in such a way as to establish safeguards against too much energy, too much “off” energy, etc.

Note: This is a delicate issue. All energy is neutral, I believe, but in any one given situation, certain energy could be “good” or “bad.” Know your own situation, your own limitations, your own “offness” in any situation, so that when you evoke the energies, for example, you know to “make peace with your enemy” before the ceremony insofar as you are able. It is necessary to pay due respect to “great mystery,” for example, to those energies I am just not able to handle right now, so I ask them, “whoever or whatever they may be,” to honor my own inferiority because I don’t know how to resonate with them, and ask them to be neutral rather than interfering, etc. Think of “semi-permeable membranes...” instead of shields.

- C. Ceremony is an alteration of consciousness.
1. It involves right brain and left brain, intellect and intuition, literal and symbolic awareness.
 2. Note also that to achieve permanent or significant results, contact must be made between the conscious and the archetypal level of the psyche, which must be engaged on some level for meaningful ceremony to occur.
 3. Ceremony involves focused attention, concentration.
 4. It involves focused intention.
 5. It involves emotion to fuel the change of consciousness.
 6. It involves specific techniques for altering consciousness.
- IV. What are some of the techniques used in ceremony?
- A. Many ceremonies of symbolic healing are long and repetitive. “They repeat the desired pattern over and over again until a connection is made and the same symbolic pattern ‘lights up’ in the patient’s psyche.” (Sanders) the psyche is *driven* into a state of receptivity.
 - B. Ceremonies may involve specific techniques such as

1. music
2. chanting
3. dancing
4. reenactment
5. drumming
6. story telling
7. meditation
8. sleep
9. dreaming
10. talking
11. entering specific environments
 - a. mountain top, cave, ocean
 - b. church, sweat lodge
 - c. circle, medicine wheel
 - d. darkness or light
12. using symbolic objects
 - a. staff, cross, medicine bag, robes, jewelry, hair styles.
13. smells, tastes, sights, sounds as
 - a. songs, gongs, bells, incense, banners, prayer flags, etc.

Note: Without a change of consciousness, such symbols and ceremony are mechanical.
 Note also: Familiarity with the symbolism aids the alteration of consciousness, but unfamiliarity does not prohibit it.

- V. What are the types of ceremony? There are several, appropriate to specific situations.
 - A. One type: Most participants are passive, while a leader or medicine person is active and does the significant part of the ceremony, as in a shamanic ceremony where a medicine man performs activities over a person, or as in a Christian mass in which the priest consecrates the host and says the prayers, etc.
 - B. Second type: The participants are active, while the leader 'hold the center' together, orchestrates the energies, keeps watch, safeguards the environment, interprets and alters the events, etc. As a counselor in psychotherapy.
 - C. Third type: There is a mutual participation, with designated roles for each person.
 - D. Fourth type: the content is the significant event, as in Navaho chants, where the participants are more passive or unimportant, except insofar as they can enact the exact content. 'If the ceremony is exactly right, the gods must grant the petitioner's request.'
 - E. Fifth Type: Some healing ceremonies involve 'removing' something from the body or psyche, some involve restoring something to the body or psyche.
- VI. What are the stages of ceremony?
 - A. Setting the intent, one or more persons.
 - B. Selecting the time, place, manner of ceremony.

C. Announcing the intent to have the ceremony and securing the necessary cooperation.

1. The person announcing says who they are, so that the 'universe' knows who is speaking.

Note: To say who you are, you must have a name known to Spirit. Re our work regarding the power in a name, choosing a name, clearing a name, one's secret name, etc.

2. Alerting your own self, body, mind, emotions, through meditation, verbalization, cleansing, purification, etc.
3. Alerting any other people who may participate in the ceremony.
4. Alerting anyone who may be affected consciously or unconsciously by the ceremony even if they are not there.

Note: Native Americans always alert the local medicine persons before a ceremony in that territory.

5. Alerting 'all my relatives' that a ceremony is being planned and asking for cooperation. Don't forget the weather, the earth, surrounding plants, structure, animals, anything related to the ceremony in any way should be alerted ahead of time and their cooperation sought, permission given.
6. Don't forget your own teachers, friends, power people in your life that are connected to you or have done ceremony with you.
7. Know the 'medicine' needed for the ceremony you are planning and be sure to evoke that energy. Remember the elements, air, fire, water, earth, and the four directions.
8. You can alert people on the unconscious level; you don't have to call Mama on the phone and tell you are going to do something she would get upset about, but in your prayers you can tell silently her, communicating with her deeper, wiser spirit, her unconscious.
9. Remember your ancestors who may be crossed over, Aunt Susie who was blind for a ceremony of sight, etc.

Note: This whole business of announcing and seeking cooperation may be the most significant part of doing ceremony, and the part that is most often overlooked.

Rainmaker story.

- D. Choose a leader.
- E. Make preparations, including preparing offerings, gift to the medicine person, this transaction being symbolic of the spiritual transaction the ceremony is meant to bring about.
- F. Choose symbolic forms, specific methods, etc.
- G. Plan for the restoration of a stable universe (Sanders) after the alteration has occurred. Be ready. Have the means to put out a fire before you start it, for example. Have 'soul catchers' ready.
- H. Have a purification. You will be coming into contact with archetypal or divine energies. You must be cleansed of any impurities or impure thoughts to be ready for that.
- I. Have a time of introspection and listening.
- J. Posit a center, make an altar.

- K. Assemble, focus attention, concentrate.
- L. Enact the ceremony. If there is identification with divine energies, use appropriate safeguards, as masks, words, transitions.
- M. Return to the origin or source of original wholeness or proper way things are or are done.

“Eliade: “We get the impression that for archaic societies life cannot be repaired, it can only be re-created by a return to sources.”

Sanders: “Psychotherapy, which is a ceremony, is a return to sources of childhood, repressed early energy, a return to an original shaping of the energy.”

N. Management of the “evil.”

Note: Some medicine people identify momentarily with evil in order to exorcise it. Jungians speak of facing the shadow, honoring the complexes, etc. Must be careful with this bit. Know what you are doing. Have others there to help if you get caught. This may or may not involve:

1. Initiation
2. Symbolic death and rebirth
3. Perilous ordeals, painful sacrifice
4. Separation from one’s past life
5. Identification with the group

Note: True healing and deep transformation involves a reconciliation with that which is “Other,” so that we no longer will speak of it or think of it as “evil,” but as “different,” and will know that we must learn to live in right relations to it, as we do to a snake or a shark or a fast moving train. This is the ultimate coming to terms with and acceptance of the mystery of existence that allows us to heal and allows peace to enter into our hearts. There are no ways to explain this or to orchestrate it for that matter. We do what we can to make a way for it to happen, and then when it does, it feels like ‘grace.’ Gratitude and joy in the midst of no matter what are the hallmarks of such a healing.

- O. Enact closure, and don’t forget thanks to all my relations.
- P. Feast, family give-away afterward. Someone expresses outwardly the gratitude
- Q. Enact ritual of reentrance to ordinary plane, bringing the new energies back with you.
- R. Comment on leaving psychological structures or physical structures ‘open’ or ‘closed’ after ceremony.

VII. What are some typical ceremonies for our lives?

- A. At the beginning or ending of any serious undertaking.
- B. Energy seeking
- C. Thanksgivings
- D. Births, birthdays
- E. Welcome of new child, naming
- F. Going to school
- G. Puberty
- H. At the beginning or break off of friendship
- I. At legal age
- J. Vision questing

- K. Getting driver's license
- L. Graduation from school
- M. Moving away from home
- N. First job, new job
- O. Moving, dedicating, clearing new home
- P. Engagement
- Q. Marriage
- R. Divorce
- S. Adoption
- T. Midlife
- U. Illness
- V. Preparation for death
- W. Actions after a death, Memorial, Mourning Rituals