

MANDALA OF SANCTUARY

This is a foundation of my daily practice. It helps me create a place of safety inside my own being, a knowingness of who I am and how to act in the world. It allows me to face the growing shit show of the world with less fear and more equanimity, and to stay on track with the work I am here to do and the expression of my mytho-poetic identity.

There is a general sequence to this practice, but it's not memorized. I have different needs on different days, so it's very adaptable. I included an image at the end of this article, which is a flat representation of the mandala sphere I currently create in the imaginal world. Not being a fabulous painter, it's nothing compared to mandala in my mind, but it does capture the essence of the elements.

Here are the steps to the Mandala of Sanctuary Practice:

1. Establish my body in physical place
2. Establish my Now and deeper ancestral and descendant time
3. Call in Guardians and Champions that feel needful in this moment
4. Bolster existing (or create new) Wards that are needed
5. Move inward to my own internal axis and guides/archetypes
6. Offering and devotion to Her

1. Establish my body in physical place:

- I begin the practice by seeing the land and surroundings where I physically am that day.
- Maybe you would picture your local watersheds as boundaries, or maybe geographic features that form natural boundaries of what you consider to be your home territory.
- I have a strong correspondence with directions and elements, so I work by connecting with what is to the east/air and south/fire and west/water and north/earth.
- I speak it out loud, while envisioning it in my mind. For example, "I turn and face east, I see the Cascade mountains, sun rising over them, a new day forming, just as it does every day. They are always to the east, just as there is always hope and possibility of new

beginnings. I see Puget Sound, Mount Tahoma and Mount Baker. I take in a deep breath of clean forest air, breathing in her pure essence.”

- If I am traveling, I obviously do it differently. I love looking at the topography and placing myself where I happen to be.
- A side benefit of this practice has been the deepening of connection with the land and water that surrounds me. Over the decades, I have established roots and connection to place partly by going and spending time on the land that surrounds me in all four directions. I envision it from actual experiences of being there. It’s lovely how the life feeds the practice, and the practice feeds the life.

2. Establish my Now and deeper ancestral and descendant time

- I begin by establishing my Now. Example: “Today is Tuesday, the 4th day of the eighth lunation, the moon is waxing towards full. We are right between summer solstice and fall equinox, in the midst of high summer.”
- I plant myself on the “circle of deep time” in my imagination. I see my ancestors stretching out in past time to one side, and descendants stretching out into future time on the other.
- This establishes my sense of being rooted in lineage, as well my sense of responsibility (out of love) to care for this world of the future. Some days, I spend time here. Asking for advice from the ancestors and clues about how to act from the descendants.

3. Call in Guardians/Champions that feel needful in this moment

- I will often feel into any fears or thoughts of “not good enough” that are arising or ongoing. I will call on different guardian or champion energies to join me in the mandala and in my day
- This is the system I use, yours may look completely different. I place the Guardians and Champions in their corresponding directions, in a way that makes sense to me. This is a partial list of some of the Guardians and Champions I may choose to call on.

East Protectors & Champions

East, spirits of air, beginnings and hope, winds of change, communication, dreams and visions, imagination and creativity

- Protect me from negative feedback loops of fear I can get stuck in
- Wards against too much news of despair I can do nothing about
- Guardians against hopelessness, mental depression or “insanity”
- Champions of innovative and visionary thinking, creativity
- Guardians of the dream world, protecting me from unwanted entities being introduced in my subconscious or dream states.
- Guardians of good healthy boundaries and enforcing them
- Champions of deep, rhythmic, powerful breathing, remembering we are never more than a breath away from connecting with Now
- Champions of optimism, hopefulness, possibility, starting afresh.
- Guardians of hateful speech, malicious gossip, downright lies or misinformation/conspiracy wacko theories
- Guardians against overactive monkey mind

South Protectors and Champions

South, spirits of fire, light the way, path finders, sun energy, abundance and generosity, determination, will power, transforming fire, ability and energy to change.

- Guardians against burnout, doing too much, giving away your power, and energy suck
- Guarding against out of balance energy consumption or use
- Guarding me from apathy and nihilism at the same time, allowing me to bypass “just a little” in order to stay effective.
- Champion flexibility and willingness to change, be flexible, adapt and grow with new conditions as they arise
- Physically ward my home from destructive forest fires.
- Protect the Olympics from fires, oh please, please, even though I know fire is part of the natural ecosystem
- Protect me, light bearer, from the really dark paths, show me the way Oh Hecate, with your lantern bright.
- Guard me from too much solar thought and linear thinking
- Champion of personal generosity and manifesting personal and collective abundance

West Protectors and Champions

Water, spirits of flow, divine feminine, connection to source, growing things, fluidity and flexibility, magic and spell work, vessels and carrying, lunar thought & consciousness, open and full functioning heart, gentleness

- Champion of full range of feeling and healing my personal condition of Half Dead Heart Disease
- Champion of heart healing, of great joy and great sadness, but guardian against more than I can bear
- Guard me from stuffing my grief or sadness
- Guardian and champion of lunar thought and consciousness
- Champion of natural cycles, lunar cycles, attuning myself to them
- Protect me from other people's magic and spell energy - be it a conscious creation or not
- Champion my strong and vital magic, help me be a magic maker
- Champion of the Sacred Feminine living inside me, filling me with softness and gentleness
- Guarding me from too much linearity, binary thinking, rigidity

North Protectors and Champions

North, spirits of Earth, mycelium, bodies, community, all my ancestors and descendants. Grounding, anchor root down, connection with land and what is real.

- Guard me from too much thought, pull me breath, here and now
- Guard the health and well-being of my communities
- Champion of me growing food and feeding my community
- Guardians of my physical body - all cells in harmony and balance, help me find any imbalance before it can grow to do real harm
- Champion of staying grounded, anchored and connected
- Champion of listen more, talk less
- Help protect me from accident / injury - being more aware of danger
- Brigid, goddess of my ancestors, watch over me, protect me, keep me under your mantle.
- Keep the foundational axis of Her strong and true inside me
- Guardian of common sense, prevention, practicality, mindfulness

4. Bolster existing (or create new) Wards that are needed

- I have created certain “Wards” over time, calling on the energy of Guardians I am familiar with, asking them to keep doing the work of warding me, even when I am not paying particular attention
- I “see” them as physical structures in the imaginal world that are very geometric - they look different than natural structures, so I can see them as human created. You can see these in the very outer edge of my Mandala of Sanctuary painting.
- This practice may or may not speak to you. I won’t say much more about it here, but you can learn more about it if you feel called.

5. Move inward to my own internal Axis and Guides/Archetypes

- Once I am firmly anchored in where and when I am, guardians and champions called in, wards tended to, I move inward.
- I tune into the presence of Her as my Axis, my structure and stability, and the Guides or Archetypes I am working with.
- This is represented on my mandala painting by the axis of the cedar tree and the figures in the trunk.
- I call on them (almost) daily and renew my connection and commitment with each of them. They are the ones who help me “stay on track” and accomplish both the work I want to do in the world, and who I want to be while doing it.
- There is a section of this website under Personal Practices, called Working with Archetypes, that has a deeper explanation of this.
- I am currently working in partnership with:
 - Spirit Seeder - the main guide for the expression of my soul's purpose, my reason for being, my original instructions
 - Sacred Feminine - my main teacher in being softer and gentler, with full feeling heart
 - The Elder I Long to Become - who and how I want to be as I become an elder, my inner mystic and visionary thinker
 - The High Priestess - she keeps the spirit bleed and days of silence and leads the rituals I do for self and community
 - The Queen - she balances sovereignty and surrender inside me, manifests delivery vehicles for my soul’s gifts to be expressed

6. Offering and Devotion to Her

- This can look a lot of different ways. I will often make a small offering plate of food or flowers and bring it outside to a sacred tree
- I will often do a somatic prayer or other devotional practice to The Great Mother, or Brigid, or the spirits of The Healing Ground, the land I live on.
- There is a section in this website called Offerings and Devotionals.

Developing your own practice

If you're inspired by the Mandala of Sanctuary, I recommend spending some time journalling or doing active imagination journeying to get a sense about what you need to do to create a sense of safety and sanctuary inside your own psyche. Here are some things you may want to consider:

- How can you feel grounded and rooted to place and time?
- What is important to your own personal sense of belonging?
- What is your relationship to guardianship and protectors and where do they exist in your ecosystem? How do you access them?
- Is your relationship with guardians already strong and vibrant?
- If you need to start from scratch, maybe try imagining a world of your own making which contains guardians or protectors who exist to help you in your struggles. What are their roles? Can you name them, establish character and physicality for them?
- Do you already have a system you work with (which you could incorporate) to keep yourself on track, motivated, confident?
- Do you have a pantheon of deities, or archetypes or characters that populate your inner reality? Or might you have a clear charter for living your best life, a list of mandates to live by, clear direction from spirit to make good life decisions? How can you call on these internal guides to help you live a life you consider worth living?
- When you think of living inside a sanctuary, what does that look like? What do you need to feel safe, grounded and in your power? What are the base needs that must be met to allow you to "level up" your inner game?

From there, you can begin to construct a piece of daily practice that grounds and anchors you and allows you step into your day with power and grace.

