

WORKING WITH ARCHETYPES

I'm not quite sure what to call this article. Another name might be "invoking guides and helpers" but it could also be called "working with internal deity forms." Whatever the name, it is part of my daily practice. The archetypes I work with have changed over time, with my changing life and needs.

For example, during the 18 years I was actively single mothering, I had a guide I called The Mama – an archetype I would invoke, an actual character (with a face and a voice) who was a practical guide to parenting as well as my check-in person when things felt really hard.

When my son turned 18, I began the transition from Mother to Queen. The classic maiden – mother - crone phases of a woman's life have had another phase added in the last couple decades – the Queen. Queen is sovereign, more independent, has lots of energy to give her gifts to the world. Even though I welcomed this transition, it was still hard. I knew the mom drill - I was good at it, had been doing it for years. It was helpful for me to invite in a new archetype (or guide or internal character) in the year before I transitioned from "son at home" to "son off at college". I could ask myself "what would the Queen do?" when I wasn't sure how to make a whole new set of personal boundaries. She helped me intuit what kind of Queen I would be, how my sovereignty asserted itself, what duties and roles I would take on.

To flesh out this topic of working with archetypes, and give some more examples, here are the ones I am working with right now:

- The Queen, as discussed above
- High Priestess - she is my guide, my wise inner ritual expert, who helps me in the planning and priestessing of the many community and solo rituals in my life. She is also the part inside me who "keeps the spirit bleed" (see the article about that on this website in Personal Practices) and loves to be in silence and draw inward. She is my more lunar consciousness, and I call on her when my monkey mind or planner is out of control. I draw on her sense of inner peace and self-sufficiency when I am on long solo backpacking trips and am wanting to escape into "mindless chatter" or I am feeling the uneasy kind of lonely.
- The Elder I Long to Become - This is a relative newcomer to the pantheon. As I write this, I am just about to celebrate my 60th

birthday. It hit me like a ton of bricks on my 55th birthday (for some reason) that I was on the fast track to becoming older, and that we have a lot of old people in this culture and a shortage of "Elders". I made a conscious decision to step into elderhood in a powerful way. I decided to do a 550 mile solo backpack trip, in part because I thought it exemplified what a bad ass elder might do.

Those three months alone in the wilderness helped me dream into life after parenting, what and who I wanted to be as I aged and what the purpose of the last third of this life was to be. I began to court the archetypal Elder and call in ancestors from my lineage who may have been powerful elders. This inner archetype I work with now takes the form (mostly) of my great great grandfather (who lived into his 90's and was Haudenosaunee Mohawk). He is my wise elder, my visionary thinker and the path to my inner mystic.

- Spirit Seeder and Sacred Feminine – These came to me in 2023 during a vision/revelatory experience I had on a 4 day fast and solo vision quest. They represent my soul, my soul's purpose, my mythopoetic identity, as well as the soft, gentle, fully functioning heart. I sometimes wish they were more forthcoming about delivery vehicles for giving my gifts, but that is the job of my ego, and the Queen. Spirit Seeder speaks in images and allegory. Her message is that I am supposed to 'seed' spirit in the world. She encourages me to have a really wide interpretation of what that looks like, and she will say things like "do what feeds your soul - not the same thing as what brings you easy joy - but what will be deeply nourishing for us. It's not always easy and may not feel joyful at first "

The way these beings show up in my practice are myriad, but normally I check in with each of them during my daily Mandala of Sanctuary practice or somatic prayer. Sometimes they don't have much to say, sometimes they do. It may just warrant a listen, or there might be a suggestion for some piece of work I need to do. I also do a deeper journey of listening with them during my days of silence. Sometimes, one of them will speak to me in a nighttime sleep dream, or imaginal journey. Each of them has a token on my altar so they are never far from my sight during daily practice.

These five beings represent what I consider to be my most important work in the world (both physical and spiritual) so it's important to me that they have visibility in my life, and ample opportunity to communicate. This system allows me to regularly review my progress in giving my gifts,

expressing my soul's purpose, heart healing/opening, increasing gentleness and compassion, becoming the kind of elder I want to be, doing the important work of leading community celebrations, and in general living the life I really want to live. I seem to have a bad case of the relatively common human condition – I am She Who Forgets. I swear, if it's not right in front of me on a regular basis, even the most important things will get lost in the shuffle of daily busy-ness.