

SPIRIT BLEED / DAYS OF SILENCE

I missed my monthly physical bleeds after menopause stopped them when I was 47. It's a struggle for me, as a daughter of modernity, to attune myself to natural rhythms and cycles, and this loss of a natural monthly cycle seemed like a step in the wrong direction! The physical act of bleeding each month was a great reminder for me to slow down, to do certain things, and not to do others.

My friend Melany Birdsong had a suggestion, based on her menstruality teachings (you can find out more about her and her teachings at melanybirdsong.com). She suggested that when I no longer had a physical bleed, I could have a spiritual one. I also learned from Therese, one of my elders and mentors, who for years has been cultivating a practice I greatly admire. She takes regular days of silence. I took inspirations from both women and crafted them into one of my favorite personal practices.

Each month, at the new moon, I take 2 days of silence and celebrate my Spirit Bleed. This is a time of shedding, surrendering, letting go. I turn to my inner High Priestess energy, retreating inward in contemplation and devotion. I take a welcome break from linear time and offer myself deep nourishment and self care.

I will often leave home for the Days of Silence. Since I live in a residential community, it can be more difficult to be quiet. It's hard to share a kitchen with 6 other adults and not speak or look them in the eye. And the temptation to do chores is a difficult one to resist. Sometimes I spend the first night in the wilderness and the second night at home. If the weather is particularly heinous, we have a moon yurt with a woodstove tucked away in the woods on our 10 acre nature preserve so I can do a two day retreat in that woman only space.

Here are some of the practices I incorporate:

- I name every moon cycle, based on what is coming through in my meditations and divinations. This naming helps me stay in tune with the coming moon cycle and the work I am doing. In the past year,

some of the cycles I have celebrated are Feral Flow, Her Many Faces, Deepening Prayer for Pilgrimage, Sanctuary, Sing to the Separation.

- Divination to explore any messages spirit has for me this cycle.
- Pouring rituals, mainly with the themes of letting go, shedding what is no longer needed, and nourishing myself
- I do an altar cleaning each month, tending the many altars I have.
- I keep a white board next to my main altar which gets updated every lunar cycle with the cycle name, the themes most alive for me, work I want to do that cycle, and notes for rituals or projects in the coming days.
- I will often tend a flame for the duration of the spirit bleed
- I do a deep imaginal journey to communicate with the “archetypes” or guides who are aiding me at that point in my life
- There is a ritual with the dark moon goddess and sacred feminine, whatever is feeling needful for that cycle.
- I spend a lot of time just doing nothing – replenishing restful time.