

# Legacy Tips & Tools

Ritual 2 -- August, 2007

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## The Importance of Ritual, Part 2 - Plan and Action

This is the first time a Legacy Tips & Tools topic has been continued over more than a month. In July you mused in the hazy sunlight of summer, reflecting and writing about what ritual is, how it nurtures your spirit and can impact the legacies you leave for future generations. You may have written about love rituals, religious or spiritual rituals, death rituals. This month, August, you have an opportunity to reread your reflective writings and translate them into a practical plan of action.

Because ritual is a vehicle for expressing love and awe that elevates the everyday to the sacred, bringing us closer to the Divine, it is imperative to do something more than muse about it. *Performing a ritual is like kissing God.* – Naomi Levy

An example from my life: I recall when I was teaching “heartmates,” cardiac spouses, about the importance of self-care (physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual) when living with a family member who was ill. I taught well and made a real difference in many heartmates’ lives. At some point I realized that I was not “walking the talk.” I could break self-care into steps for others to ensure their success, but I was not practicing self-care for myself. Raised by depression parents, I received the legacy that hard work was what made me worthy, and I was teaching my children the same. I knew little about nurturing my spirit with beauty, recreation, fun, and serenity .

I created a ritual for myself, one difficult to practice at first, but which became a catalyst for significant life changes I later made. I decided to make one weekday each week a time I would not work. Instead I would experiment with doing things to feed my soul...I called these my “flower days.” As a first step I drew a flower in my calendar to fill the space. That wasn’t so hard. But when that day arrived each week, I needed to decide what in the world to do to fill a day without work. That was hard! After many months, I came to relish this ritual that freed me to walk around the lake, go to the movies by myself in the middle of the day, visit a museum, journal leisurely in front of a crackling fire, eat a lunch of homemade soup while reading a novel...I could go on, but the essence of this practice was that I learned the value of being spontaneous and curious, of not structuring every moment, of enjoying beauty and feeling deep gratitude for my blessings ... and I was feeding my starved soul.

*Ritual involves taking time to understand how a certain facet of one’s experience fits into the larger context of life.* – Denise Linn

Reread your writings from last month. Choose one ritual you want to re-include or initiate in your life.

1. If the ritual is new it may require a design and a plan; take time to create it, make it real, and into do-able steps.
2. If it requires you to change how you use time, make space for it in your daily calendar or weekly planner.
3. Use a notebook or a journal to keep a log of process notes about your progress and experience as you integrate this ritual into your life. Take no more than 5-15 minutes each time you write.



4. Consider the following to guide your reflections on your ritual practice: How does this ritual isolate you or connect you to others, family, the past and the future, the Divine? How easy or difficult is the ritual for you? What does it mean to you? Is there a natural place/space for you to integrate the new ritual into your life? Which of your needs does this ritual address? How does the practice reflect your sense of spiritual purpose? Are there changes you need to make as you experience doing this ritual? What are you learning about yourself and your values as you do this ritual? What value(s) that you want to pass to the future are you living as you practice this ritual?

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