



Creating Sacred Space

Creating Sacred Space is a practice used to start ceremony, ritual and circle work. It can be done in many ways, the most important component being the intention of the person conducting the process.

Sacred Space can be referred to as a protected zone created with intention and ritual, in which to focus and go deeper into one's inner world or any of the shamanic realms. In witchcraft this process is referred to as Casting a Circle, in Native American ceremony it is referred to as Calling the Directions, and as Kathy Jones, Priestess of Avalon says, "Creating sacred space is about finding the stillness within and allowing that to expand and fill the space you have created." Creating sacred space can be done individually or with a group.

A Sacred Space can also be created more permanently in a certain place in your home or work environment with the creation of an altar that you regularly visit and tend.

The following are components of Sacred Space and some examples of ways to create it.

Smudging

Smudging or Smoking is an ancient cross cultural practice used to cleanse and purify spaces, things and individuals. Smudge sticks, often sage, and sometimes rosemary, lavender or eucalyptus leaves, are burned and their smoke penetrates the energy field of a space, thing or individual and removes extraneous energies from the field. These energies could be stagnant, residual vibrational energies from previous activity in the space or use of the thing or feelings experienced by the individual. The smoke 'attaches' to the energy and removes it as the smoke drifts away, dissipating its effects.

The intention of the person conducting the smudging ritual is paramount and needs to be focused and purposeful. Incense can also be burned in a space with similar results. Smudging is recommended at the start of ceremony, ritual and circle work of both the space and the individuals involved.

Creating an Altar

An Altar can be your own private Sacred Space in your home, or work place, or a group altar in a shared space, or the central altar or direction altars in a ceremony.

For your private altar: on a mantelpiece or shelf, place items from nature that bring you good feelings about yourself and your expression in the world. Photos of relatives, special trinkets, power objects, crystals, things you've made, cards - you'll know what to put there. Creating an altar and attending to it is a ritual that will bring you connection with your inner journey at any stage in your life including menstruation, pregnancy, birth and menopause. You will be able to see and feel "where you are" with relevant issues and situations because what you bring to your altar each day will be a reflection of you during that point in time. Visiting your altar could also include lighting a



candle, making a dedication, giving thanks etc. Think metaphorically and observe your subconscious 'speaking' to you as you do these things. Consider yourself an altar and see where that metaphor takes you.

For a ceremony or circle work, you can create a central altar around which you will sit as a group that contains symbols and talismans of the work you intend to do together. For example, if your focus is on women's cycles you could have a collection of treasures that map the cycle around a circle, or perhaps various items that the participants have brought with them. You can also have either around the outside of your seated or standing circle or within the central space, an altar to each direction (East, North, West, and South). These will serve the purpose of assisting you in invoking the directions and holding the sacred space you create by making a literal 'container' in which you sit.

Invoking the Directions

Invoking the directions positions us in space, creates for us a map. We locate ourselves right here, right now. Invoking the directions is one of the first procedures of ceremony.

Invoking, or calling and re-calling the directions creates the Great Wheel. The Medicine Wheel as it is referred to by Native Americans. The Wheel of Life, The Spinning Wheel.

The Great Circle that tells the story of the cycles and spins for eternity. The story of the seasons of the earth, the seasons of our lives, the vegetation cycle, the moon phases, a woman's monthly cycle. All these cycles continuously enact the grand cycle of birth, growth, harvest, decay, death, and rebirth.

So when we invoke the directions we remind ourselves of all the wisdom the Great Wheel holds, the wisdom of the cycles. Everything has its seasons. And each direction holds and represents certain qualities and characteristics that together make the whole picture, an important perspective.

East, North, West, South.

We invoke the directions by calling them. When we speak out for example "I call the direction East", in that process we recall the qualities of that direction. We remind ourselves of each direction's energies and can again view our lives and everything going on within and without from the perspective of the cycle wisdom. We then truly see the journey from one direction to the next, on and on, each direction having a very particular and unique character to it.

Continuing with the Medicine Wheel, each direction represents an earth season and a life season. In the Southern Hemisphere this translates to:

East = Spring, girl - Maiden, boy - Young Man

North = Summer, Mother, Father

West = Autumn, Maga, Magus

South = Winter, Crone, Wise Man



It is traditional within the Native American way to also honour the axis's that hold the quadrants of the four directions, Father Sky and Mother Earth, "which creates not just a circle, but a round, all-inclusive sphere and allows us to have some sense of the totality of all life."¹ And to also call the Centre, the still place from where all else arises.

At the close of a ceremony the directions are released or devoked.

In the Southern Hemisphere, we travel widdershins or anticlockwise around the circle as call the directions.

EAST

I invoke the direction of the East.

Where the sun rises.

The direction of spiritual birth and awakening.

The realm of the child and young adulthood.

The energy of the season of Spring and new beginnings.

I call the qualities of the East be with us.

NORTH

I invoke the direction of the North.

The direction associated with life force,

The vitality that arises when the heart opens.

The realm of the mother and father.

The energy of the season of Summer and of full bloom.

I call the qualities of the North be with us.

WEST

I invoke the direction of the West.

The direction where the sun sets,

The place of harvest and letting go.

The realm of the maga and magus.

The energy of the season of Autumn.

I call the qualities of the West be with us.

SOUTH

I invoke the direction of the South.

The direction of universal wisdom, purity and clarity.

The realm of the crone and the wise man

The energy of the season of Winter.

I call the qualities of the South be with us.



I call Above
Father Sky,
The heavens above.
The angelic realm, the teachers, the guides
Be with us
Embrace us.
We give thanks to
Great Spirit, Goddess, Love, universal divine energy
above, around and within

I call Below
Our Mother Earth
Hold us
nurture us
support us.
Draw us to you with your love.

I call the Centre.
The space of the all, right here, right now
and forever.
The space of stillness and presence.
I call the qualities of the Centre be with us.

When working in the Northern Hemisphere, we reverse the Earth Season and Life Season for North and South and travel in a sunwise/clockwise around the circle as we call the directions.

And then at the closing of the ceremony / event, you need to release the directions.

Southern Hemisphere releasing

I release the direction East
and give thanks for the teachings and the blessings of the East.

I release the direction North.
and give thanks for the teachings and the blessings of the North.

I release the direction West
and give thanks for the teachings and the blessings of the West.

I release the direction South.
and give thanks for the teachings and the blessings of the South.

I release Above,



I release Below.

I release the space of the Centre
and give thanks for the teachings and the blessings of the Centre.

Northern Hemisphere releasing

Work in the reverse direction – East to South, West and North and to the Centre.

ⁱ Buffalo Woman Comes Singing by Brooke Medicine Eagle. Ballantine Books