

Mystery Image #1



Mystery Image #2



Mystery Image #3



Mystery Image #4



Mystery Image #5



Common Read: Excerpt from: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/504688/ritual>

Ritual:

Ritual, the performance of ceremonial acts prescribed by tradition or by sacerdotal (i.e., priestly) decree. Ritual is a specific, observable mode of behavior exhibited by all known societies. It is thus possible to view ritual as a way of defining or describing humans.

Nature and significance:

Human beings are sometimes described or defined as a basically rational, economic, political, or playing species. They may, however, also be viewed as ritual beings, who exhibit a striking parallel between their ritual and verbal behavior. Just as language is a system of symbols that is based upon arbitrary rules, ritual may be viewed as a system of symbolic acts that is based upon arbitrary rules.

Excerpt from: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-rituals-work/>

Why Rituals Work:

Recent research suggests that rituals may be more rational than they appear. Why? Because even simple rituals can be extremely effective. Rituals performed after experiencing losses – from loved ones to lotteries – do alleviate grief, and rituals performed before high-pressure tasks – like singing in public – do in fact reduce anxiety and increase people's confidence. What's more, rituals appear to benefit even people who claim not to believe that rituals work. While anthropologists have documented rituals across cultures, this earlier research has been primarily observational. Recently, a series of investigations by psychologists have revealed intriguing new results demonstrating that rituals can have a causal impact on people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Dia de los Muertos / Day of the Dead

By Anonymous, Indianapolis, IN

It all started out more than 500 years ago, when the Spanish Conquistadors landed in what is now Mexico. The Conquistadors ran across natives practicing a ritual that seemed to mock death itself. This ritual is known as Dia de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead. This ritual is celebrated in Mexico and certain parts of the United States, including the [San Fernando] Valley.

Many celebrations are held each year in many Mexican countries such as Mesa, Chandler, Guadalupe, and many more. Although the ritual has been together with Catholic theology, it still maintains its basic principles of the Aztec ritual. Today, many people make wooden skull masks called calacas and dance in honor of their deceased relatives. The wooden skulls are also placed on altars dedicated to their deceased loved ones. Some people also make sugar skulls—incribed with the name of their deceased loved ones on the forehead—which are eaten by a relative or friend. The Aztecs and other Meso-American civilizations kept skulls as trophies and displayed them. The skulls symbolize death and rebirth. Also, many skulls were used to honor the dead, whom the Aztecs and other Meso-American civilizations believed came back to visit during the monthlong ritual.

To make the ritual more Christian-like, the Spaniards moved the date to coincide with All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day (November 1 & 2). It used to fall on the ninth month of the Aztec Solar Calendar and was celebrated for the entire month. Festivities were presided over by the goddess Mictecacihuatl, known as "Lady of the Dead," whom many believed had died at birth.

In the United States and in Mexico's larger cities, families build altars in their homes, dedicating them to the dead. They surround these altars with flowers, food and pictures of the deceased. They light candles and place them next to the altar. And that is what I learned about Day of the Dead.

Rituals: Birth

When a baby is born, there are various traditions, customs, or rituals families participate in depending on their culture or country of origin. In the United States, for example, it's customary to visit the new parents and baby and bring already-cooked meals so that parents have one less thing to worry about as they care for their newborn. What about other cultures? How do they celebrate the birth of a baby?

| Puerto Rico | Trinidad and Tobago | Mexico |
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| Newborn babies wear a bracelet with a black charm in the shape of a fist. It is called <i>mano de azabache</i> and is meant to ward off evil and bring good luck to the baby. Many people provide new parents with this bracelet for their baby | When people visit newborn babies, they usually put money into the baby's hand. It is meant to bring prosperity and good blessings to the newborn. Another custom is that some parents do not allow people to come in their house after 6 pm, since the evening dew will make baby sick. | The women of the family – grandmothers, aunts, sisters – nurture and take care of the new mom for 40 days after the birth of a baby. These women help with the cleaning, cooking and older kids. The new mom's only job is taking care of the new baby. |

New Year's Rituals in Mexico

by Chela Orozco

With the arrival of a new year in Mexico, hopes for better times also arrive. In the Mexican culture, so full of traditions, year-end rituals are an important part of popular belief for finding love, money, good luck and — hey, why not? — even winning a new car. There are an endless number of rituals, perhaps one for every Mexican family, and they're passed down from generation to generation.

Some rituals have religious backgrounds, like praying the rosary, attending mass before 12 o'clock, and lighting candles, but most have more to do with luck and good fortune.

Here are some of the most common:

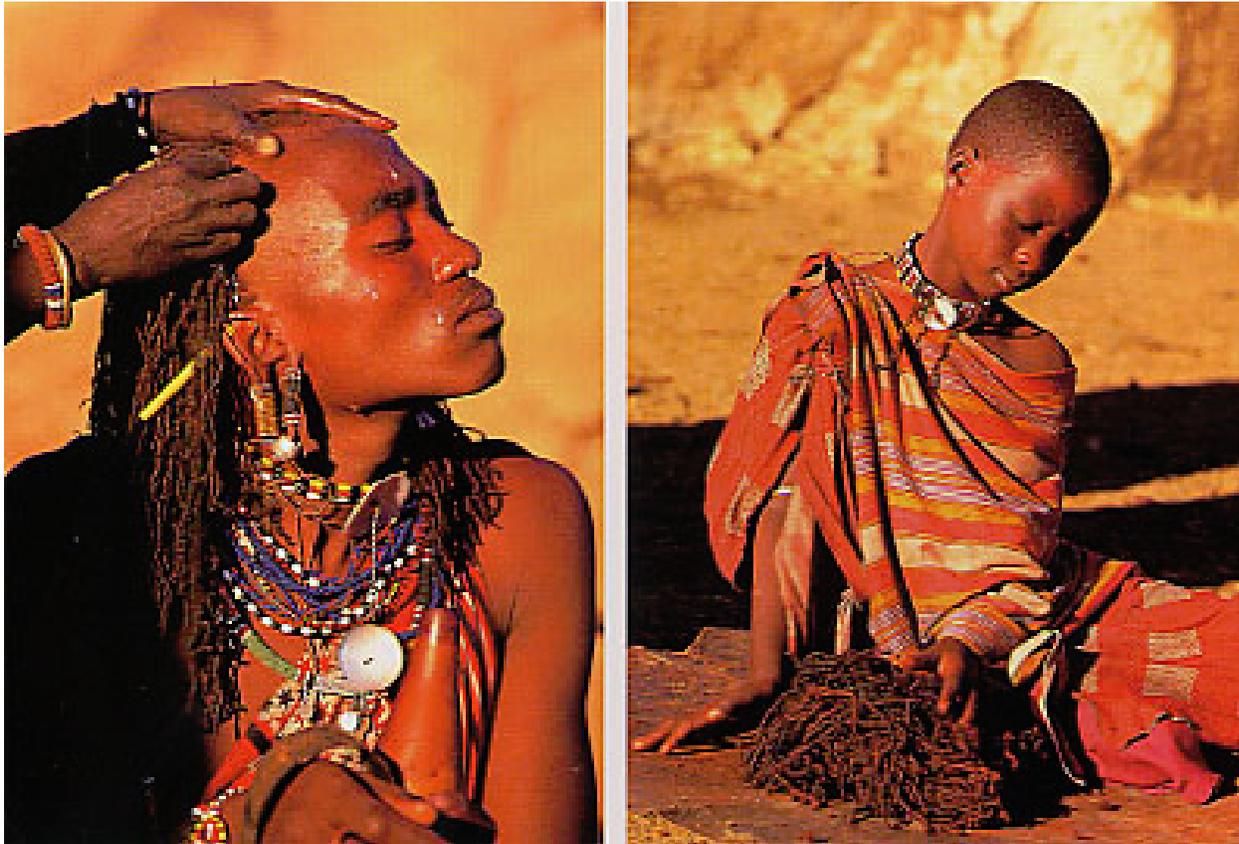
According to tradition, before the end-of-the-year dinner, thoroughly cleaning the house is recommended to get rid of bad vibes and to attract better things.

Making a wish list is part of the year-end ritual. Write them down and have them on hand for the rest of the year. Common goals include losing weight, quitting smoking, changing jobs, healthy eating, and even ending a relationship.

The clothing worn at the year-end dinner also has a special meaning for some people. Some tend to dress in white clothing to ward off illness and to attract good health. Most people, however, use garments worn for the first time for that evening: coats, shawls, hats, scarves, sweaters, shirts, ties, and — curiously, under all those warm clothes — red and yellow underwear.

The reds are used to attract love and passion ... ¿The yellow?... to attract happiness and wealth.

Source: <http://castinet.castilleja.org/users/pmckee/af%20rituals/rituals-index.html>



Maasai and Samburu boys and girls participate in "coming of age" ritual ceremonies at the onset of puberty. The boy is having his head shaved as part of the ritual. Both boys and girls go through ritual purification as part of the ceremonial entrance to adulthood.

African American Elders, Cultural Traditions and the Family Reunion By Renee McCoy

Family reunions are important rituals that have long contributed to the survival, health, and endurance of African American families, helping to maintain cultural heritage even in uncertain and turbulent times. Although there is variation in how African Americans hold family reunions these days, some key elements remain constant. One constant is that these events generate such power, in large part, from the participation of the elders—the keepers of the African American legacy.

The family has been the bedrock of African American culture from times of slavery through the tumultuous days of mandated racial segregation. One of the most devastating aspects of the slavery experience was its ability to weaken and distort this highly revered institution; fortunately, those attempts were unsuccessful. It was the structure of the African American family, grounded in unavoidable collectivism, that enabled survival from slavery and sustenance throughout the tumultuous days of Jim Crow and widespread white supremacy.

As the toils and tears of the civil rights movement yielded positive results, subsequent progress initiated dramatic shifts in cultural patterns and processes of family life. Waning of systemic barriers widened the world and made it more accessible, while family cohesiveness and identity became diluted and less essential for survival, making families more American and less African. Large family gatherings grew less essential for the continued existence of both the family and the community, and occurred with less frequency—or were confined to religious events.

Family reunions surfaced as vehicles through which cohesiveness could be restored and culture revitalized. They emerged as rituals capable of strengthening and stabilizing the African American family, and as tools for building strong and viable foundations for future generations. African American elders became indispensable resources for their wisdom and guidance, and were, in turn, recognized and given strength, empowered, and authenticated.

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Eraser Challenge</u></p> <p>The Eraser Challenge is a dare game that involves rubbing a rubber eraser against one’s skin while reciting the English alphabet. Although it has been played by teenagers for years, the challenge drew attention from the news media and school officials in April 2014 after a Connecticut middle school principal alerted the parents about the dangers of the game. Doctors warn that the rubbing can leave scars on the skin and cause infections.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cinnamon Challenge</u></p> <p>The cinnamon challenge is a viral internet challenge. The objective of the challenge is to film oneself swallowing a spoonful of ground cinnamon in under 60 seconds without drinking anything, then upload the video to the Internet. The challenge is extremely difficult and carries substantial health risks because the cinnamon coats and dries the mouth and throat, resulting in coughing, gagging, vomiting and inhaling of cinnamon, leading to throat irritation, breathing difficulties, and risk of pneumonia or a collapsed lung.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Huichol Tree Marriage</u></p> <p>In some villages of the Huichol Indians of Mexico, before a young man or woman is considered ready for marriage, they “wed” a tree for four years. This initiatory rite, undertaken at about age fifteen, rests on the understanding that the chosen tree represents the initiate’s own perfect partner, what the Huichols think of as the opposite hidden within. The initiate regularly visits their tree and pours out their longing for “the perfect love.” The young woman or man talks to their tree when happy or sad, when scared, angry, or confused; they confide their losses and successes. They cultivate this relationship for four years.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Salt & Ice Challenge</u></p> <p>The salt and ice challenge is a dangerous YouTube phenomenon wherein participants pour salt on their bodies, usually on the arm. Either the person or someone else applies ice to the salt. This causes a "burning" sensation, and participants vie to withstand the pain for the longest time. The challenge is recorded and posted on YouTube or other forms of social media.</p> <p>The mixture of salt and ice lowers the freezing point of water, which can quickly cause second- and third-degree injuries similar to frostbite. Due to the numbing sensation of the cold and possible nerve damage during the stunt, participants are often unaware of the extent of any injuries sustained during the challenge. Participants risk suffering frostbite-like symptoms and second- or third-degree burns. Skin discoloration from the challenge may remain after the challenge has been completed or failed.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Jewish Bar Mitzvah / Bat Mitzvah</u></p> <p>Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah are Jewish coming-of-age rituals. They literally translate to "son / daughter of commandment." But it also means "someone who is subject to the law."</p> <p>According to Jewish law, when Jewish boys become 13 years old, they become accountable for their actions and become a bar mitzvah. A girl becomes a bat mitzvah at the age of 12. Prior to reaching bar mitzvah, the child's parents hold the responsibility for the child's actions. After this age, the boys and girls bear their own responsibility for Jewish ritual law, tradition, and ethics, and are able to participate in all areas of Jewish community life.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Christian Confirmation</u></p> <p>Confirmation is a rite of initiation in several Christian denominations, normally carried out through anointing with oil, the laying on of hands, and prayer, for the purpose of bestowing the Gift of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>In Christianity, confirmation is seen as the sealing of the covenant created in Holy Baptism. In some denominations, confirmation also bestows full membership in a local congregation upon the recipient. In others, such as the Roman Catholic Church, confirmation "renders the bond with the Church more perfect", because, while a baptized person is already a member, "reception of the</p> |

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| <p>Traditionally, the father of the bar mitzvah gives thanks to God that he is no longer punished for the child's sins. In addition to being considered accountable for their actions from a religious perspective, b'nai mitzvah may be counted towards a minyan (prayer quorum) and may lead prayer and other religious services in the family and the community.</p> | <p>sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace."</p> <p>In the West, it is administered, ordinarily by a bishop, only when the child reaches the age of reason or early adolescence. Among those Catholics who practice teen-aged confirmation, the practice may be perceived, secondarily, as a "coming of age" rite.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Quinceañera</u></p> <p>Quinceañera is the celebration of a girl's fifteenth birthday in communities of people from Latin America. This birthday is celebrated differently from any other as it marks the transition from childhood to young womanhood.</p> <p>Quinceañera is a two-part festivity that begins at the local Catholic church. The quince girl attends a special Mass in which she reaffirms her dedication to God and receives a blessing from the priest.</p> <p>Afterward, the reception gets underway, typically involving some combination of dancing, limousines, food & desserts, and an official presentation of the quince girl to fiesta attendees. Quinceañeras serve as a female's official entrance into society and womanhood. Parents may even spend more on their daughters' quinceañeras than their weddings. A low-end quinceañera in the United States can easily cost about \$3,000.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Amish Rumspringa</u></p> <p>Rumspringa is an Amish practice, which teenagers often experience before their baptism. Between the ages of 14 and 16, adolescents are permitted to do activities that are not condoned by the religion, such as date, go out with friends, consume alcohol and leave their communities. The goal of rumspringa is ensure that their baptism is their choice. Following Rumspringa, the majority of teens still choose to commit to the Amish way of life.</p> <p>Amish elders generally view it as a time for courtship and finding a spouse. A popular view exists by which the period is institutionalized as a rite of passage, and the usual behavioral restrictions are relaxed, so that Amish youth can acquire some experience and knowledge of the non-Amish world.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>College Graduation</u></p> <p>Mystery also plays a role in group cohesion. When a new member is recruited to a "secret society" or similar organization, promises are shared, oaths recited, sacred responsibilities pronounced and accepted. Access is allowed to secret writings or places.</p> <p>Consider the typical graduation ceremony at a college or university. Students and faculty in long flowing robes listen to speakers make weighty pronouncements. Dignitaries hand out scrolls. It is an echo of ancient rites signifying initiation into a guild consisting of the educated elite.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Becoming a Marine</u></p> <p>From the moment the apprehensive recruits step out of the buses and take their places on yellow footprints painted on the pavement, the pressure never lets up. At breakfast, long before dawn, they march through the chow line silently and at attention.</p> <p>"We teach them how to stand and how to talk," says Staff Sgt. G.F. Jones, a drill instructor. "Everything they knew, we've taken away from them. All they know is what we tell them." They are taught to speak, and even think, of themselves as "the recruit." The word "I" is gone.</p> <p>Often newcomers to an organization are infantilized (rendered baby-like) with a shaved head or rules of conduct that forbid them from speaking unless spoken to. The significance of a shaven head has been understood since the Biblical story of Samson. It indicates the taming of the wild man and submission to control or discipline.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Prom</u></p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Maasai Lion Hunt</u></p> |

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| <p>Prom (short for promenade) is a semi-formal dance of high school students. This event is typically held near the end of the senior year.</p> <p>At prom, a Prom Queen and Prom King may be revealed. These are honorary titles awarded to students elected in a school-wide vote prior to the prom. The Prom Queen and Prom King may be given crowns to wear.</p> | <p>The Maasai people of Tanzania and Kenya replace their warrior class every 6-10 years. The new group of warriors are then circumcised and moved into a warriors' camp where they will live until the next generation takes over. In the past the Maasai had to stalk and kill a lion with only a spear before they were considered warriors.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Birth & Name-Giving</u></p> <p>Birth is a major adjustment for the infant as he/she leaves the familiar environment of the womb and takes his/her place in the world.</p> <p>There are many unique customs that different cultures observe when naming their children. For instance, some people belonging to the Jewish faith believe it is improper to name a child after someone who is still living. They also believe it is improper to discuss names before the birth of the infant.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Satere-Mawe Tribe Initiation</u></p> <p>This Amazon tribe performs an initiation ritual where young men really place their hands into mittens filled with hundreds of bullet ants. The bite is about 20 times more painful than being stung by a wasp. The tribal men will gather the ants and submerge them into a solution that temporarily knocks them out. The ants are then woven into the mittens. Upon waking up, the men will place their hands into the mittens and dance for 10 minutes. The ant's sting prevents the body from protecting itself from pain. The body begins to convulse, and the pain can last up to 24 hours.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Loss of Virginity</u></p> <p>The first act of sexual intercourse is commonly considered within many cultures to be an important personal milestone. Its significance is reflected in expressions such as "saving oneself", "losing one's virginity," "taking someone's virginity" and sometimes as "deflowering." The occasion is at times seen as the end of innocence, integrity, or purity, and the sexualization of the individual.</p> <p>Traditionally, there was a cultural expectation that a female would not engage in premarital sex and would come to her wedding a virgin, which would be indicated by the bride wearing a white gown, and that she would "give up" her virginity to her new husband in the act of consummation of the marriage.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Spartan Krypteia</u></p> <p>In ancient Sparta, the Krypteia ("hidden, secret things") was a state institution involving young Spartan men who had completed their training with such success that they were marked out as potential future leaders. They were given the opportunity to test their skills and prove themselves worthy of the Spartan elite through participation in the Krypteia.</p> <p>Every autumn, Sparta would declare war on the helot (Greek slaves) population so that any Spartan citizen could kill a helot without fear of punishment. At night, the chosen members of the Krypteia were sent out into the countryside armed with knives with the instructions to kill any helot they encountered and to take any food they needed.</p> <p>This may also have contributed to the Spartans' reputation for stealth since a kryptes who got caught was punished by whipping.</p> <p>Only Spartans who had served in the Krypteia as young men could expect to achieve the highest ranks in Spartan society and army. It was felt that only those Spartans who showed the willingness and ability to kill for the state at a young age were worthy to join the leadership in later years.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Akika</u></p> <p>Akika is the Islamic tradition of the sacrifice of an</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Okipa Ceremony</u></p> |

animal on the 7th day after a child's birth. It is widely performed by Muslims, who slaughter one sheep for a baby girl and two sheep for a baby boy. If one cannot slaughter on the seventh day, one may slaughter on the fourteenth day or on the twenty-first day. If one is not capable of doing so, then one may slaughter any time before the puberty of the child. After puberty, the person should slaughter for himself/herself. Muslims believe that after performing akika their children will be safe from harm.

The Okipa ceremony of the Mandan Indians opened with a Bison Dance, followed by a variety of torturous ordeals through which warriors proved their physical courage and gained the approval of the spirits.

The Okipa began with the young man not eating, drinking, or sleeping for four days. They are then led to a hut, where they had to sit with smiling faces while the skin of their chest and shoulders was slit, and wooden skewers were thrust behind the muscles. Using the skewers to support the weight of their bodies, the warriors would be suspended from the roof of the lodge, and would hang there until they fainted. To add agony, heavy weights were added to the initiate's legs.

After fainting, the warrior would be pulled down and the men (women were not allowed to attend this ceremony) would watch the warrior until he awoke, proving the spirits' approval. After awakening, the warrior would sacrifice the little finger on both hands, each finger being severed by the initiate with a hatchet. Finally, the warrior would be taken outside where he would run around the central plaza of the village several times.

Cutting

Purposely injuring oneself by scratching or cutting the body with a sharp object — enough to break the skin and make it bleed — is called cutting. Cutting is a type of self-injury. People who cut often start cutting in their young teens. Some continue to cut into adulthood.

People may cut themselves on their wrists, arms, legs, or bellies. Some people self-injure by burning their skin with the end of a cigarette or lighted match.

When cuts or burns heal, they often leave scars or marks. People who injure themselves usually hide the cuts and marks and sometimes no one else knows.

Some people who cut have had a traumatic experience, such as living through abuse, violence, or a disaster. Self-injury may feel like a way of "waking up" from a sense of numbness after a traumatic experience. Or it may be a way of reliving the pain they went through, expressing anger over it, or trying to get control of it.

Earth Walk

In the Pyrenees Mountains along the French-Spanish border, for Basque children raised in the traditional way, there are several stages of cultural and spiritual training in childhood and early adolescence.

At age sixteen, some Basque youth undertake a yearlong solo "earth walk," an extended period of wandering. From age fourteen to sixteen, the initiates undergo intensive preparation in all aspects of survival, from the physical to the emotional and spiritual, culminating in the earth walk for those who choose this ordeal of solitude and wandering.

If a youth elects to go, she carries with her a blanket or shawl, woven by her mother, containing 365 warp threads. The Wanderer pulls out one warp thread each day, thereby keeping track of the temporal expanse of her journey as she walks a remote trail from one end of the Pyrenees to the other.

Vision Quest

A traditional Native American vision quest is often used as a Rite of Passage, marking the transition between childhood and full acceptance into society as an adult.

Hazing

Hazing is the practice of rituals and other activities involving harassment, abuse, or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group. Hazing is seen

A person's first vision quest is typically done during their transformative teenage years. When an older child is ready, he will go on a personal, spiritual quest alone in the wilderness, often in conjunction with a period of fasting. This usually lasts for a number of days while the child is attuned to the spirit world. Usually, a Guardian animal or force of nature will come in a vision or dream and give guidance for the child's life. A vision quest helps the teenager to access spiritual communication and form complex abstract thoughts. Through this Rite of Passage the child becomes an adult, taking responsibility for themselves and their individual contribution to a healthy society. The child returns to the tribe and once the child has grown he or she will pursue that direction in life. After a vision quest, the child may become an apprentice of an adult in the tribe of the shown direction (Medicine Man, boat-maker and so on).

Upon completion of the quest, the quester speaks of his or her experience to a trusted elder who provides spiritual guidance and interpretation of the Vision. The elder helps the quester understand his or her experience.

in many different types of social groups, including gangs, sports teams, schools, military units, and fraternities and sororities. Hazing is often prohibited by law and may comprise either physical or psychological abuse. It may also include nudity or sexually-oriented offenses.

Hazing activities can involve forms of ridicule and humiliation within the group or in public while others are akin to pranks. Spanking is done mainly in the form of paddling among fraternities and sororities. The hazee may be hosed or by sprinkler, buckets or hoses; covered with dirt or with (sometimes rotten) food, even urinated upon.

Servitude such as waiting on others or other tests of obedience. In some cases, the hazee may be made to eat raw eggs, peppers, hot sauce, or drink too much alcohol. Submission to senior members of the group is common. It may include prostration, kneeling, groveling, and kissing body parts.

Islamic Hajj

The Hajj is an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. It is one of the five pillars of Islam, and a religious duty which must be carried out by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so at least once in his or her lifetime. The Hajj is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people, and their submission to God (Allah). The word Hajj means "to intend a journey" which connotes both the outward act of a journey and the inward act of intentions.

Because the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar, eleven days shorter than the Gregorian calendar used in the Western world, the Gregorian date of the Hajj changes from year to year.

Pilgrims join processions of hundreds of thousands of people, who simultaneously converge on Mecca for the week of the Hajj, and perform a series of rituals: Each person walks counter-clockwise seven times around the Ka'aba, the cube-shaped building which acts as the Muslim direction of prayer, runs back and forth between the hills of Al-Safa and Al-Marwah, drinks from the Zamzam Well, goes to the plains of Mount Arafat to stand in vigil, and throws stones in a ritual Stoning of the Devil. The pilgrims then shave their heads, perform

Gang Initiations

Gangs use the initiation rite as a means of determining if the inductee is mentally and physically strong enough to be worthy of membership. In other words they want members who have "heart" and who won't will run at the first sign of trouble.

Gang members frequently refer to joining a gang as "Blood in - Blood out" - This is particularly true of prison gangs. "Blood in" requires the prospective member to shed the blood of someone by assaulting them or murdering them. "Blood out" refers to the only way a member can leave the gang - either by his natural death or his death at the hands of the gang.

Street gangs also use a variety of acts to induct an individual into full membership. During "Beat in" or "jump in" the inductee must prove him/her self by enduring a severe beating by a pre-determined number of members for a pre-determined number of minutes. During this act the members use fists, kicks and stomps, or even clubs to beat the new member. This is frequently called an "act of love." It is also, in many cases, an act of extreme violence. The new member at best may survive with broken ribs, cuts and contusions or maybe a broken jaw. However the beating can be so severe that the person could suffer permanent injury or even death.

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| <p>a ritual of animal sacrifice, and celebrate the three day global festival of Eid al-Adha.</p> | |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>The Hippocratic Oath</u></p> <p>An oath is a solemn promise, often invoking a divine witness, regarding one's future action or behavior.</p> <p>The Hippocratic Oath is an oath taken by doctors swearing to practice medicine honestly. It is believed to have been written by Hippocrates, often regarded as the father of western medicine. The oath is considered a rite of passage for practitioners of medicine in many countries, although nowadays the modernized version of the text varies among them.</p> <p>The Hippocratic Oath is one of the most widely known of Greek medical texts. It requires a new physician to swear upon a number of healing gods that he will uphold a number of professional ethical standards.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>First Kiss</u></p> <p>Many people look forward to their first kiss. A kiss is the pressing of one's lips against another person or an object. Depending on the culture and context, a kiss can express sentiments of love, passion, affection, respect, greeting, friendship, peace and good luck, among many others. In some situations a kiss is a ritual, formal or symbolic gesture indicating devotion, respect, or sacrament. For example, in the case of kissing a temple floor, or a religious book or icon. Besides devotion, a kiss has also indicated subordination or, nowadays, respect.</p> <p>"Making out" is often an adolescent's first experience of their sexuality and games which involve kissing, such as Spin the Bottle, facilitate the experience. People may kiss children on the forehead to comfort them or the cheek to show affection.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Physical Signs of Puberty</u></p> <p>Many youth eagerly anticipate the first signs of puberty as they develop and mature. For others it can be a scary and uncertain time. Girls developing breast buds or starting menstruation. Boys growing facial hair or ejaculating for the first time. These physical changes tell us that we are no longer children, and that we have embarked on the long path towards adulthood.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Voting</u></p> <p>A voting age is the legal minimum age that a person must be to be eligible to vote in a public election. Typically, the age is set at 18 years; however, ages as low as 16 and as high as 21 exist.</p> <p>The vast majority of countries in the world have established a voting age. Most governments consider that those younger than the chosen threshold lack the capacity to decide how to cast a vote.</p> <p>There has also been discussion of giving votes to children from birth, initially with the votes being cast by parents, who are presumed to better understand a child's interests (Demery voting).</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Getting Your Driver's License</u></p> <p>When teenagers earn their driver's license, their parents are forced to turn loose of the reins and trust their child's abilities a little more.</p> <p>A car is a heavy, dangerous piece of machinery. Operating one requires skill and responsibility to keep everyone safe. After passing a written exam, a driver earns a temporary permit. Usually learners must practice with a licensed driver for 6-12 months before they can take their final exam.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Getting Your Working Papers / First Job</u></p> <p>In New York, youth must be at least 14 years old to receive working papers. After that point, they are allowed to seek paid employment with certain restrictions. Earning money is a major step on the road to independence. Often the responsibilities of a job help young people mature and gain a better understanding of the world outside of school.</p> |

Able to Drink Alcohol Legally

Countries around the world define the legal drinking age differently. It wasn't until 1984 that the United States passed a law raising the minimum age to 21 years old. Many states still allow minors to consume alcohol under certain circumstances: for medical or religious reasons, or on private property with parental consent.

Still, for many today, 21 is a major milestone because you can now purchase alcohol yourself. Also, many clubs have a 21+ age limit.

Getting a Piercing / Tattoo

Bodily modification and adornment are seen in every culture throughout history. Two common examples in our modern society are piercings and tattoos. Both require individuals to be over 18 or have parental consent.

Most people who get tattoos or piercings (ears, nose, lips, tongue, eyebrow, nipple, etc.) say they do so as a form of self-expression. It's a way to share our personality or beliefs. Others say it makes them feel beautiful. Regardless of the reason, every piercing and tattoo has a story behind it.

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Name _____

Common Read: Excerpt from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rite_of_passage

Rite of Passage

A **rite of passage** is a ritual event that marks a person's transition from one status to another. The concept of rites of passage as a general theory of socialization was first formally articulated by Arnold van Gennep in his book *The Rites of Passage* to denote rituals marking the transitional phase between childhood and full inclusion into a tribe or social group. The concept of the rite of passage is also used to explore and describe various other milestones in an individual's life, for any marked transitional stage, when one's social status is altered. Gennep's work exercised a deep impact on anthropological thought.

Milestones include transitions from puberty, middle school to high school, coming of age, marriage, and death. Initiation ceremonies such as Baptism, Akika, Upanayana, Confirmation and Bar or Bat Mitzvah are considered important rites of passage for people of their respective religions. Rites of passage show anthropologists what social hierarchies, values and beliefs are important in specific cultures.

The Three Phases

Rites of passage have three phases: **separation**, **transition**, and **reincorporation**.

In the first phase, people withdraw from their current status and prepare to move from one place or status to another. The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group ... from your current role in the community or at work, but most especially from your way of understanding yourself." There is often a **detachment** or "cutting away" from the former self in this phase, which is signified in symbolic actions and rituals. For example, the cutting of the hair for a person who has just joined the army is "cutting away" the civilian self. Many coming of age ceremonies symbolize the death of the child, which precedes the birth of the adult self.

The transition phase is the period between states, during which one has left one place or state but has not yet entered or joined the next. "The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous," and involve facing **the unknown**, which can leave us vulnerable or afraid. This phase often involves an **ordeal, task, or challenge** of some kind to complete, through which the initiate arrives at a new, often broader, concept of self. They occur in a **sacred space**, such as a church, temporary hut, or alone in nature. And they are led by **ritual elders**, wise leaders who have learned much about life and can help youth claim their own power.

In the third phase (reincorporation) the passage is consummated by the ritual subject. Having completed the rite and assumed their "new" identity, one re-enters society with one's new status. Re-incorporation is characterized by elaborate rituals and ceremonies (like quinceaneras and graduation) and by outward symbols of new ties. Thus in rites of incorporation there is widespread use of a **sacred bond** (e.g., a belt, ring, bracelet, crown, or necklace).

What is a Man?

Because we've lost our traditional definitions of masculinity – physical dominance, social importance, financial achievement – many guys feel restless and without a sense of purpose. They lack true confidence. Our society is full of boys pretending to be men. They're the way they are, honestly, because nobody showed them what a mature man is like. Don't mistake controlling, threatening, or hostile behavior for strength. In reality, men like that are showing an underlying extreme vulnerability and weakness, the vulnerability of a wounded boy.

A Man Is Not Defined By His Possessions or His Career. A Man Is Defined By His Accomplishments and His Purpose.

If you were to die tomorrow, what would you leave behind? How will people remember you? Will you have just treaded water, merely "getting by?" Or will you be known for your adventures, for the dreams you chased down and for the deeds you've accomplished? Will you live a life that's full, or will you allow yourself to be the sum total of your possessions? A man is someone who sets goals and charges after them. What those accomplishments and deeds are depend on the man – but they are a mark of his ambition and drive, *not* his willingness to let life just happen.

You're not your job. You're not how much money you have in the bank. You're not the car you drive. You're not the contents of your wallet. You are *not* your fucking shoes. You have been programmed by your society (i.e., companies and the media) to make you think that possessions and status are paramount.

A Man Does Not Fear Failure

Failure is not to be feared or avoided. To fail, one must first try; to avoid failure means to avoid trying anything new. Failure is how we learn. When a man fails, it only means that he must take what he has learned and apply it, then try again differently.

A Man Does Not Make Excuses

Excuses are the reasons why we allow ourselves not to try. Excuses are how we rationalize our fear of progress or our unwillingness to change. If a man truly desires something, then he strives for it; obstacles are only hindrances to a goal, not reasons to never try in the first place.

A Man Takes Responsibility

To take responsibility means to take ownership of our actions, for the good and for the bad. If we are the authors of our own success, so too are we the authors of our own failures and a man must acknowledge them. A man faces the consequences of his actions and doesn't shirk them or attempt to pass them to others.

A Man Has A Duty To Become His Best Self

All too often we allow ourselves to lose sight of not just who we are but who we want to be. It is seductively easy to sink into our current identities and say "This is just who I am. I can't change." Doing so means giving up and settling for being less than the best we could be, even as we acknowledge that we are never finished improving, growing, and learning.

Do the best you can until you know better. And when you know better, be better.

A Man Acknowledges His Limitations, Even As He Strives To Overcome Them

Everybody has their strengths, just as they have their weaknesses. It is part of what makes us human. Having a limitation does not mean that you are somehow less. Your weaknesses are not what define you; they are part of what you work towards overcoming.

A Man Is At Peace With His Emotions

Our emotions aren't something to be feared, nor are they something to repress. By the same token, our emotions do not make us special or rule us, nor do we wallow in them. We acknowledge that we have them, and we allow ourselves to feel how we honestly feel. If we are angry, then we allow ourselves to be angry. If we are sad, then we allow ourselves to be sad. Emotions in and of themselves are neutral; it is how we react to them that defines us.

A Man Does Not Define Himself or Others By Sex

The number of sexual partners a person has is irrelevant to their worth as a person, male or female. A virgin is no better and no worse than someone who has had many partners; the only difference is in the levels of experience. Similarly, a man does not ascribe value to one's sexual orientation; whether one prefers men, women or both makes no difference so long as everybody is of appropriate age and consents.

A Man Has Respect For Others

The default assumption is that everybody is worthy of respect. It's only through an individual's actions that merits lowering that level of respect for them.

A Man Welcomes Equality

A woman's rise to social and sexual equality is something to be welcomed. A man doesn't fear a woman's social stature or the upending of traditional social roles because he knows that privilege does not have to be a zero-sum game. Strong women do not make weak men. By the same token, a man respects people of different races, religions, and viewpoints.

A Man Accepts Who He Is With Honesty and Integrity

There is no profit in a man lying to himself about who he is. Part of being a man means acknowledging who you are in totality rather than trying to deny aspects of yourself in hopes that by doing so you can make them disappear, or to pretend that you have parts to your life that do not exist. We are who we are, with the good and the bad, the beautiful and ugly, the parts we wish we had but do not and the parts we desperately wish would go away. It's only in accepting ourselves in total that we can work to improve ourselves and build the lives that we ultimately want.

What is a Woman?

Because we've lost our traditional definitions of femininity – physical dominance, social importance, financial achievement – many feel restless and without a sense of purpose. They lack true confidence. Our society is full of boys pretending to be men. They're the way they are, honestly, because nobody showed them what a mature man is like. Don't mistake controlling, threatening, or hostile behavior for strength. In reality, men like that are showing an underlying extreme vulnerability and weakness, the vulnerability of a wounded boy.

**A Woman Is Not Defined By Her Possessions or Her Career.
A Woman Is Defined By Her Accomplishments and Her Purpose.**

If you were to die tomorrow, what would you leave behind? How will people remember you? Will you have just treaded water, merely "getting by?" Or will you be known for your adventures, for the dreams you chased down and for the deeds you've accomplished? Will you live a life that's full, or will you allow yourself to be the sum total of your possessions? A woman is someone who sets goals and charges after them. What those accomplishments and deeds are depend on the woman – but they are a mark of her ambition and drive, *not* her willingness to let life just happen.

You're not your job. You're not how much money you have in the bank. You're not the car you drive. You're not the contents of your wallet. You are *not* your fucking shoes. You have been programmed by your society (i.e., companies and the media) to make you think that possessions and status are paramount.

A Woman Does Not Fear Failure

Failure is not to be feared or avoided. To fail, one must first try; to avoid failure means to avoid trying anything new. Failure is how we learn. When a woman fails, it only means that she must take what she has learned and apply it, then try again differently.

A Woman Does Not Make Excuses

Excuses are the reasons why we allow ourselves not to try. Excuses are how we rationalize our fear of progress or our unwillingness to change. If a woman truly desires something, then she strives for it; obstacles are only hindrances to a goal, not reasons to never try in the first place.

A Woman Takes Responsibility

To take responsibility means to take ownership of our actions, for the good and for the bad. If we are the authors of our own success, so too are we the authors of our own failures and a woman must acknowledge them. A woman faces the consequences of her actions and doesn't shirk them or attempt to pass them to others.

A Woman Has A Duty To Become Her Best Self

All too often we allow ourselves to lose sight of not just who we are but who we want to be. It is seductively easy to sink into our current identities and say "This is just who I am. I can't change." Doing so means giving up and settling for being less than the best we could be, even as we acknowledge that we are never finished improving, growing, and learning.

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What Woman Is

Grandmothers know things that have taken a lifetime to earn. They know that women grow out of girls, and that the journey has taken thousands of years. Grandmothers know that girls are sprites, bringing light playfulness to the serious side of our world, and they are emotional antennas, telling what they know, as boys learn to get quiet with their feelings.

Girls grow to womanhood by learning they pulse with the cycles of life. They learn to flow gracefully into the stream of their world, even as they learn to make and guide their own rudder.

Women wrap their arms around life, around their loved ones, around their homes. They bring life into the world and know that they have Mama Bear spirit within, will do whatever it takes to protect their young. Over time they learn that being Mama Bear does not mean self-conscious alarm over every step, but is a rambling journey of exploration, fully grounded, finding and giving nourishment, teaching our young how to grow strong and self sufficient. Women nuzzle. Women roar.

Women swaddle babies and guide children, even if they have none of their own.

Women know loss. Women cradle death as well as life, holding dead spirits, dead bodies, and missing limbs. We know that to rebirth a soul means to just be nearby sometimes. Silently we care for physical space to show love that reaches into dark souls, and sometimes breathes life back.

We wash bodies with no more spirit and place them gently into the earth for safekeeping, and we reach into the earth for our own strength, seeking the flow of wisdom from our grandmothers and grandfathers. We dig up roots and share them at the family table.

A woman knows that reaching out to sky, or into the world, is a skill we must develop and carry always. There are times we are protected, as children, and times we learn to make our own path, walking long roads to find our ancient sisters, those who birthed babies alone in fields, and who gathered wood alone in the winter to warm themselves & their families.

Once we have struck out on our path, we find that while there are terrifying nights when fierce wind blows away all of our courage, there are also mornings of dew and warming sun to bring us back to life. Sometimes we wait in the dark for small twinkling stars, bits of wisdom within us, tiny light when we need it most. Some call this intuition. Learning to follow those stars, to hold them in our mind day and night, takes discipline and devotion. It is lonely work.

We find our path at times full of "mean girls" and are stronger for withstanding the pressure to give in to our lower selves. We find sustenance in stretching our minds, but also know that our spirits need room to grow into full-fledged, full-bodied Amazon soul warriors. We find our tribe and build communities out of nothing but meals and stories, trading clothes and hugs.

No matter her size a woman must know that her body is her temple, and that only when she learns to guard her own gates does she begin to know real safety. We love our smile lines and our stretch marks, lines of service, stripes of valor. We shun notions of external beauty and create our own from deep within. This beauty is easily recognized in any face. Women dress well and with attention; first with love and respect for ourselves, then for the enjoyment of others.

Women build their own fortresses, and know who to take in and who to turn away. Men and women of lesser value will come knocking, and discernment is one of her most important tools.

Women find battles in corporate board rooms and in their own homes, in standing on their feet 16 hours a day to serve others, and inside their own minds. Women learn to come to each skirmish with grace, with intelligence well-heeled, with determination, with strength of character and with nothing to hide. Once a woman knows how to wield a sword of discernment, and when to make deep cuts, or kill, then she knows when to win at any cost and when to stand down. She makes the salves that soothe her soul, and heal others, and brings them back to the table of family and community.

A woman knows how to lose, how to win, and how to keep going after either outcome.

A woman knows that men are outward facing, hard-wired to protect and serve the needs of his family and community, same as her, but very different too. She joins her partner in his work to build a life. She leads him (and others) to build relationships, and follows when he knows the way, and sometimes when he doesn't. She knows the journey is more important than the destination.

But a mature woman will not waste years tending a garden in bad dirt. She admits her mistakes, learns from them, mourns them, and moves on if there isn't good ground to till. A wise woman makes her own ground fertile, soulwork that feeds hundreds, if not thousands.

If she digs a hole too deep, she hauls herself out of it. If she needs a rope, she asks for help.

A fully realized woman will spin grace and beauty into the lives of her loved ones, in material things, but more importantly in spiritual realms. A woman knows how to find the best in herself, and how to encourage the best in others. She knits together the lives of many, making those memories that keep us warm, strong, and hopeful. She cooks to nourish our bodies and souls, making food into an offering. A woman knows to bless the table, calling down Spirit, and invoking gratitude. She makes sure we is well fed in every way.

Even in the worst storms of life, she keeps a small ember of hope and belief in herself glowing, sometimes so deep down even she forgets. But one day it gets warmer and finally burns hot in her again, shining through her eyes. Sometimes this process seems divine, and she is comfortable there, in the swirl of mystery and faith and unimaginable grace.

A woman can bring light to every part of her life — she finds that the other side of sorrow and loss is immeasurable and unlimited Joy — and she laughs often in delight at the wonder of it all. Always a Sprite, she creates fun from the mundane, blowing bubbles from dish soap. She works for happiness, and she protects it.

Women cherish the pleasures of touch and sensuality. They become more sexual as time goes by and the children no longer need constant tending. Having learned to love themselves, they can fully give themselves to another, without getting lost. With the right partner, they lose self-consciousness and send sparks of creation, transcendence and gratitude to the divine.

She becomes a grandmother when she settles completely into herself, sees the mountains and valleys of her life in true measure, and blesses the path of children, women and men who follow her. She knows she can feed them only small pieces of her journey, as they must find their own way. She listens deeply.

Grandmother teaches us to go past fear, to hold onto our embers and starlights, to forge our own swords. She stands as a guide, an example, and a comfort to show us that there is a place of redemption for a life well-lived. She holds the visions — of the world and for each of us — seeing us on our path and rightly beautiful. She loves us unconditionally, even when we cannot love ourselves, and knows the value of forgiveness and rest.

Woman knows that life is short, and hard times seem to last forever. And all is well, eventually.

Source: <http://dahlimama18.blogspot.com/2008/05/what-woman-is.html>

High School Interviews

1. How is high school different from middle school?
2. What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced as a high schooler?
3. How have you overcome these challenges?
4. What responsibilities have increased as a result of you getting older? Family? academic? social?
5. In what ways have your relationships with your friends changed?
6. Have you been given more independence? If so explain?
7. Have you faced any harsher realities around the idea that actions have consequences?
8. What's something you know now that you wish you knew at the beginning of high school?
9. What new skills have you picked up or improved (e.g., cooking, laundry, organization, babysitting, managing money, etc.)?
10. What advice would you give incoming 9th graders about school? friends? dating?
11. What's something you worried about as an 8th grader that wasn't a big deal in 9th grade?

The Challenge of Listening to Our Souls

Unlike other sentient (able to feel or perceive) beings, our human psyches (minds) are divided into two components: a conscious self (the ego) and a personal unconscious, the unconscious being much larger of the two. This division is the source of the difficulty of coming to know our souls.

Our conscious understanding of self, especially when we are young, is limited. Self-understanding grows and develops as our bodies do, gradually. At birth, there's no consciousness of a self at all. The ego acquires its initial shape during the first four years. As it matures, the ego is capable of understanding more of the total psyche of which it is one small part.

The soul is one aspect of the psyche rarely grasped by young people, no matter how healthy the individual and the cultural environment. It takes a rather mature ego to do this. The young ego, primarily a product of culture and language, is mystified by soul, which is pre-cultural and non-linguistic.

Furthermore, our soul qualities are usually not honored or encouraged by our families, partly because they can't see those qualities or are afraid of them, and partly because of their own ideas of who we ought to be. Parents and siblings may in fact actively suppress our soul qualities.

In our youth, our self-image is constrained by the traits or roles favored by friends, teachers, and parents, and we attempt to fit ourselves into an acceptable role — a tough guy or a sweetheart, a leader or a follower, a thinker or an athlete.

Our parents have the most influence on our self-concept, and often family traditions and desires are at odds with the direction of the soul. Your parents may want you to be a scholar, a doctor, a lawyer, a priest, or a comedian, but your destiny is not likely reducible to *any* specific category.

Even the healthiest families, those that create a safe and loving environment of self-discovery, unconsciously communicate to the child a collection of (mostly positive) messages as to who he is and even some (mostly loving) expectations as to who he should become. This is as it must be; we treat others as having a complementary place in the ongoing drama of our own lives. The unhealthy family actively suppresses and discourages any personal characteristics outside a narrowly defined and codependent range. In either case, the child's challenge is like that of the swan in the fairy tale. Raised by ducks, he thinks he is one. He just can't understand why he's so ugly. It will be awhile before he discover his true essence, his beauty and destiny as a swan.

In essence, before entering the second cocoon, we tend to become the people others treat us as being. We become human, first, by listening to our family and culture, and only later do we listen to our souls.

A second reason soul qualities are not obvious to the young is that the soul speaks a different language. The child's society may speak English or Spanish or Swahili, but the soul, as we have seen, speaks in emotionally-laden, dreamlike images. The young ego is not equipped to translate the soul's language into its own. Indeed, this is challenging for a mature adult, even one who is poetically minded and versed in the language of symbols.

A third reason is that the young ego is too busy with other important things. It has the full-time, critical job of figuring out how to create a good place for itself in the very context into which it was born -- its culture and language. This is a central task of childhood and adolescence.

Our human form of self-consciousness is the greatest obstacle to soul encounter, even though it may be our most defining and significant human attribute. What distinguishes us as humans is that we know that we know -- *Homo sapiens sapiens*, "twice wise" primates. Without egos, we would not have the capacity to be self-reflexively conscious of anything (a capacity, for example, an infant lacks), but we *would* be living the lives of our souls as fully and beautifully as do unself-conscious beings, like infants, deer, or blossoms. Not having egos, there is nothing to get in the way of their embodiment of soul. Our form of consciousness is both our greatest blessing and our greatest curse. It may render soul discovery and embodiment difficult, but then, without it, we wouldn't be able to consciously appreciate and celebrate the miracle and mysteries of existence.

Completing Unfinished Business

There is always some remedial work in the second cocoon. No matter how wholesome your childhood and teen years, no matter how loving were your parents and teachers, no matter how much you avoided the major traumas of this human life, there are going to be some spotty areas in your earlier development. There will be some aspects of ego growth — which is the foundation of your soul path — that were neglected or glossed over. Now, in the second cocoon, there's both time and need for some catch-up.

You are never done, of course, with the tasks of ego growth. It's a life-long project. Every personality is an unfolding story, a never completed product. Upon reaching a new plateau of development, additional material will appear for you to work on. What is important in the second cocoon, especially at its beginning, is to complete those pieces of old business that otherwise would keep you imprisoned in your former identity.

Unfinished business arises in relation to the developmental tasks of the life stages that precede the second cocoon. For example, the cultivation of emotional skills is an essential task of early adolescence. Your success in later developmental stages depends, in part, upon your emotional foundation. **Do you know how to fully experience, understand, express, and act on your emotions? In a way that respects both yourself and others?** If you have difficulties with any aspects of emotional competence, it would be wise to seek guidance or mentoring through an emotionally mature friend, teacher, or family member.

Another example, a task normally completed in a healthy middle childhood, is discovering the enchantment of the natural world and experiencing your full membership in it. **Do you need to become more grounded in your relationship to the wild world?** If, when you are in nature, you don't experience deep comfort, endless wonder, and an empathic resonance with the natural world, then consider field courses in natural history, guided wilderness journeys, or simply an extended time outdoors in undomesticated settings.

Your own body is also, of course, an aspect of nature, and **it is essential to be comfortable in your body, appreciative of it, and competent in caring for it.** If you need to improve your relationship to your body, consider courses or coaching in yoga, tai chi, sports, dance, herbology, or nutrition; the services of health care practitioners; sessions of massage, or other bodywork disciplines.

The wilderness of your imagination is another essential dimension of your own human nature. If you don't enjoy a robust relationship with the imaginal, especially your deep imagination — your dreams, deep imagery, and visionary capacities — consider studying dreamwork, imagery journeys, art, dance, music, or creative writing.

Maybe your listening or conflict-resolution skills require some polishing. If so, consider relevant workshops, men's and women's groups, or relationship practices focused upon empathy and communication.

Whatever your weak points are in these areas, this stage of the journey is the best time to fill in the gaps that may otherwise hold you back from — or compromise the quality of — your life's true work.

Pathways to Soul

- deep imagery or active imagination
- the discovery, fashioning, and use of symbols and sacred objects
- self-designed ceremony (a means of conversing with the sacred Other)
- skillful use of hallucinogenic substances within sacred ceremonies
- symbolic artwork
- journal work
- fasting
- breathwork
- extreme physical exertion
- yoga disciplines
- the way of council
- trance drumming and rhythms
- ecstatic trance dancing
- ceremonial sweats and saunas
- the enactment of traditional ceremonies, rituals, and nature festivals
- vision questing
- understanding and responding to signs and omens in nature
- talking across the species boundaries (nature dialogues)
- animal tracking and other methods of sensitive and skillful nature observation
- the telling, retelling, and study of myths and other sacred stories
- personal myth work
- storytelling of one's own personal journeys
- sensitive listening and clear reflection upon others' stories
- sacred speech and ritual silence
- soulful music, poetry, and chanting