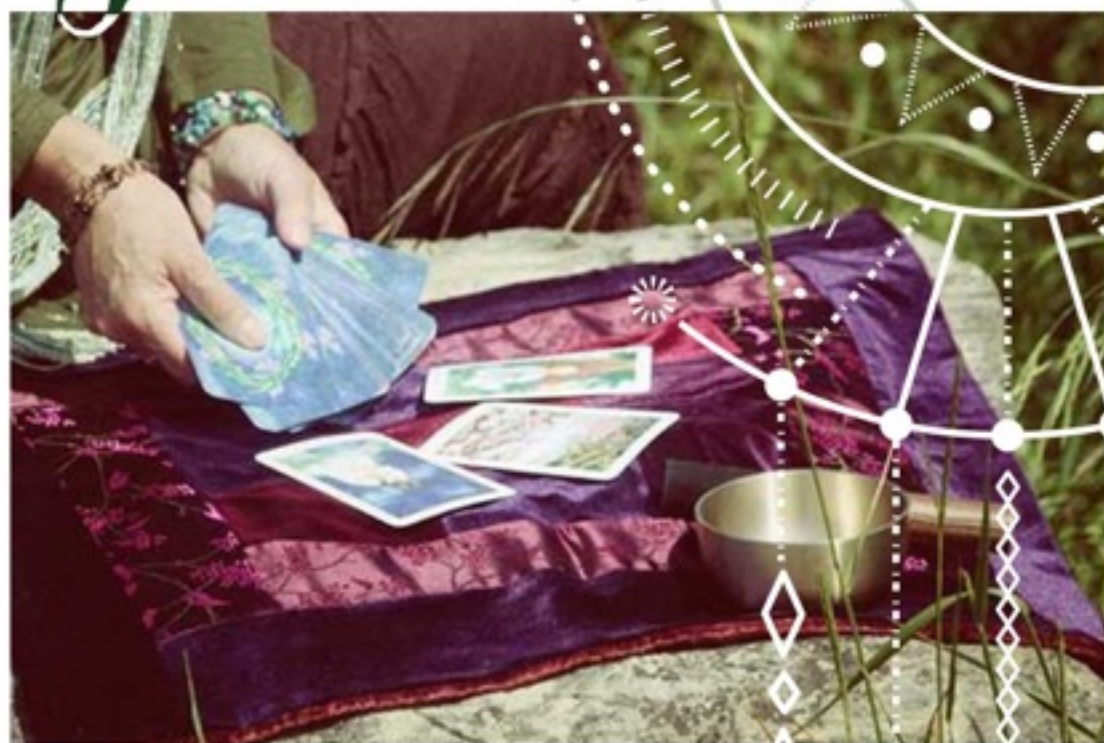


Explore

*earth wisdom
tarot
sacred art*



with Joanna Powell Colbert

My work is centered around three main themes: Earth Wisdom, the Tarot, and making Sacred Art.

I'm very happy to share some of my favorite practices in all three categories with you!

—Joanna



earth wisdom

“Knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond.”

— Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

I want to share with you one of my favorite nature practices, a Contemplative Walk.

Set aside a morning or afternoon when you can wander in a natural place undisturbed. Give yourself at least an hour or two. Choose a place that is fairly wild. This might be a large regional or state park in your area, a nature preserve, a city park, or your own back yard. Turn your cell phone off, or put it in airplane mode. Take your journal and camera with you if you like. You may want to bring a compass (or use the compass app on your phone).

Look for a physical threshold to cross over. It might be the edge of woods and meadow, or it might be a natural archway of stones or trees. It could be a log that you step over or a passage between two stones. Wander around until you find one, and cross over it with intention. Say to yourself something like “I am now entering sacred time.”

Once you’ve passed the threshold, observe three cross-



cultural taboos: you will speak to no humans, nor enter a human-made structure, nor eat human food (except water) until you have crossed back across the threshold once again.

Wander around until you find a spot that feels comfortable and right to you. Settle in and make yourself comfortable, either standing or sitting. Ground and center yourself by doing some deep breathing. Orient yourself to the four directions, either with the use of a compass, or by noticing where the sun is, in the sky.

Now face each of the four directions in turn, beginning with the East. In each direction, notice what you see, hear, smell, touch, even taste. Be sure to look down; look around at eye level; look up; look at things up close; look at the whole landscape. You may want to write or sketch in your journal.

Ask yourself:

- *How does the element of Air show up in the East?* (clouds, breeze, birds)
- *How does the element of Fire show up in the South?* (sunshine, sparkling light on water, sweat)
- *How does the element of Water show up in the West?* (pond or river or seashore, rain, thirst)
- *How does the element of Earth show up in the North?* (rocks, trees, animals)

When you've greeted each direction in turn, come back to center and acknowledge the Great Above, the Great Below, and the Center.

Consider making a Nature Wheel or another kind of earth art to leave as an offering. (Find something in each of the four directions and bring it back to center, making a mandala of found objects.)

When you're ready to leave, come back over a threshold. Say to yourself "I am now entering ordinary time."



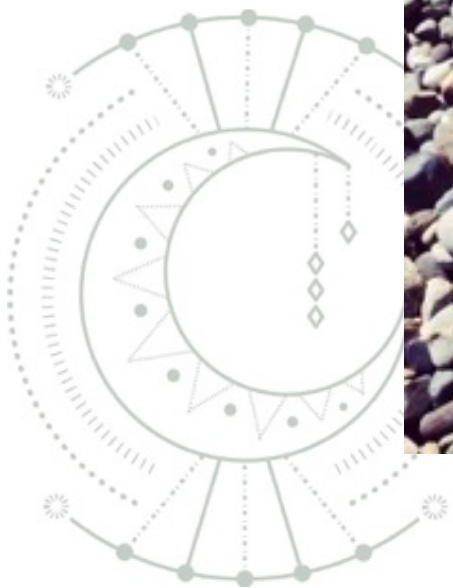
Creating a culture of gratitude begins with cultivating a relationship of reciprocity with the natural world.

First we notice; we don't expect a message or an oracle. We give the gift of our attention.

Then we give thanks, for all that we have noticed with all our senses.

As part of giving thanks, we make an offering. It's a gesture of respect. Offerings establish gratitude and reciprocity. They say: *We are in this together. We don't just take, we offer back in return.*

An offering can be many things: a crumbled cookie, loose herbs or grain, a stack of stones, a hair from your head, a song, an arrangement of found objects, the pouring out of water, even your breath.



tarot

The Art of Asking Questions

Often you, or the person you're reading for, won't know exactly what question you want to ask. You know you are troubled by a situation, or want some guidance, but are vague about specific questions. It's a good idea to take as long as you need to clarify the question that you want to ask. You can ask the tarot anything and receive an answer. But if you are unclear about what you are asking, you will be unclear about the answer you receive.

So I often ask myself: "What do I really want to know?" and the answer may pop right into my head.

Many years ago, I heard Mary Greer say that her favorite all-purpose question is: "What do I most need to look at in my life right now?" That's the question I most often ask. Sometimes I'll rephrase it as "What do I need to know right now?"

I may add: "about a certain issue or area of my life." For example: "What do I need to know right now about the creative project I'm working on?"

I may also add a time frame: "What do I need to know about the creative project I'm working on over the next three months?"

I'm also fond of asking questions like the following, as I've found they give me the kind of guidance I need:

- What is the energy around this situation?
- Choices; which option among several are best?
- What am I supposed to be learning from this situation?

If you are reading for another person, they will sometimes assume that you will predict the future for them, and they may ask close-ended questions like *Will I get a raise?* *Will my boyfriend propose?* etc. You can help them rephrase the question. So . . . *When will I find a mate?* becomes *What can I do to attract love into my life?* *Will I get a raise* becomes *How can I show my employer that I deserve a raise?*

The most important thing to remember is to ask clear, open-ended questions that begin with *How* or *What*. In general, don't ask Yes/No questions. They're just not empowering, and in my experience, they are never terribly accurate.

A Simple Three Card Spread

I'm a big fan of three-card spreads. I like to use these spread positions:

1. Opportunity.
2. Challenge.
3. Resolution (not only how the situation will resolve, but what you will resolve to do about the situation).

After reading the three cards, I will often pull one more card, just for a little extra guidance.



How to Read Intuitively

When you are first learning about a new tarot deck, I encourage you to turn up a card a day, and jot down your impressions of the card in your tarot journal before you look up the meaning in the book. Then compare your own impressions to the text in the book. What insights do you have that are not found in the book?

Try these intuitive methods:

- Notice your first impression of a card, and your emotional reaction to the card. Love it? Hate it? Puzzled by it?
- What does the card look or feel like to you?
- What does it remind you of? (perhaps a person, place, or experience)
- Throw out a few one-word descriptions (like “serene” “innocent” “peaceful”).
- Give it a title, as if it were a dream (“Woman in the Water”).
- Be open to any wild ideas or associations that fly into your head.

If your own “take” on a card is quite different from the description in the book, don’t assume that you are wrong and the book is right. There is room for both (or more!) interpretations of every card.



sacred art

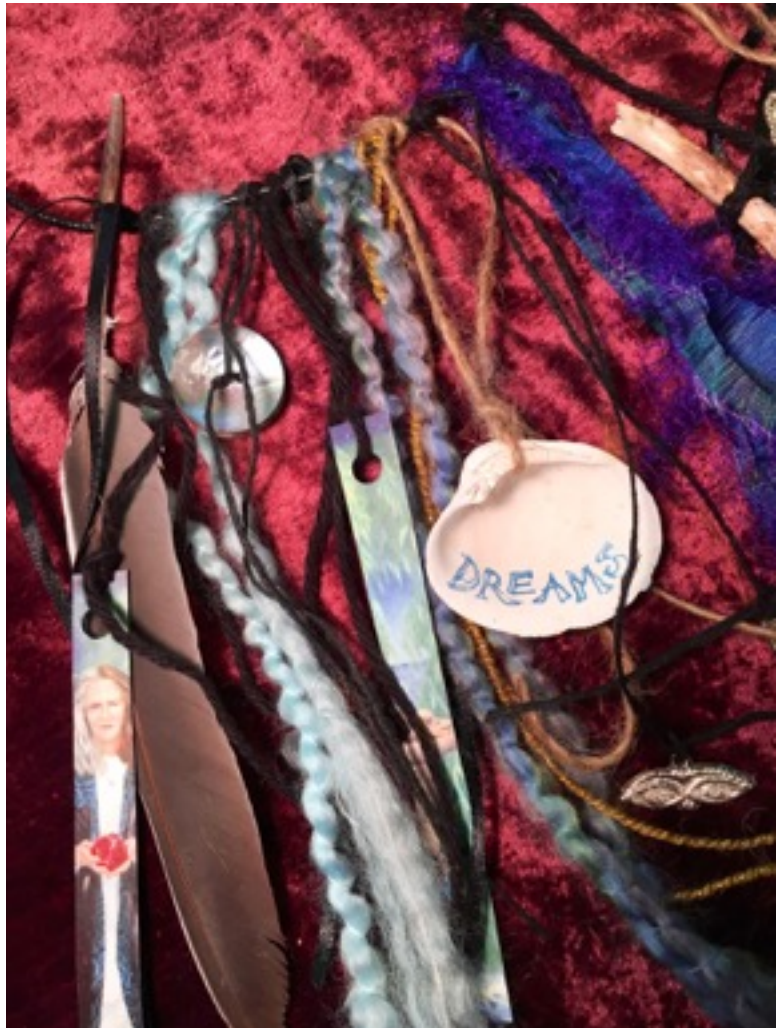
Make a Talismanic Necklace

“We move what we’re learning from our heads to our hearts through our hands.”
— Brené Brown, *Rising Strong*.

Talismanic art will draw a certain quality to you, or will memorialize an experience, or will carry the energy of a certain tarot card or archetype.

A talisman is there to support you in your actions, to remind you of what’s important, and to hold the energy you’ve put into it. It’s a reminder of why you’re doing what you’re doing. It brings you back to center.

This kind of talismanic necklace is very easy to make and will only take an hour or two. Remember you really cannot do it wrong!



Gather Materials

You can either have a specific tarot card in mind, an archetype, or a theme (like prosperity or protection). Choose your colors and elements according to the theme or card. Plan a little bit ahead of time.

OR

Go purely on instinct and pleasure, choosing items as you are drawn to them. Let your piece talk to you and tell you what it signifies when it's done.



Art supplies:

- Necklace cord with clasp (Example: <http://www.firemountaingems.com/itemdetails/h209527jd>).
- Tarot or other oracle cards from broken decks (these will be cut up or torn up).
- Yarn, ribbon, twine, lace, and/or strips of material. I love recycled silk sari ribbon.
- Beads (especially ones with large holes that will fit onto the yarn, ribbon etc), charms, milagros, repurposed jewelry, buttons.
- Sticks, small pine cones, shells, stones, feathers, other things from the natural world that are small and light-weight (they will be tied or glued on to the necklace).



Tools:

- Scissors.
- Glue gun.
- Hole punch (to punch holes in cards or pieces of cards).

Process:

Start with a necklace cord or use a length of ribbon.

Tie various yarns, threads, and ribbons on to the necklace.

Add beads, charms, repurposed jewelry, sticks, pine cones, feathers, shells, anything you like. You can use a glue gun when necessary for extra adhesion.

If you're really daring, you can cut up tarot cards from broken decks into strips, punch a hole in them, and tie those to the necklace too.

My only bit of instruction is to tie your yarn, ribbon, etc onto the necklace in a loop ... it's a little more elegant than a square knot. This knot is often called a "lark's head knot."



Examples:

You can see the wide variety of talismanic necklaces made by participants in my workshop at the 2017 Kingston Lenormand Tarot Conference!



Necklaces made by Christine Walter and Lorita Jean.



Necklaces made by Michelle Crawford-Bewley, Angela Sabrina, Susan Flynn, and Zann Carter.

Consecrate Your Talisman

(These guidelines are for any kind of talisman, not just this particular necklace.)

Cleanse the talisman with fire (smoke) or water: Make or gather sacred waters (sea water, moon water etc). Or use any kind of smoke that resonates for you, such as cedar, pine, sage, or sweetgrass.

Bless it: You can write a blessing or just speak from your heart. Example: *“O Keeper of the Mysteries, hear my prayer. May this talisman awaken my intuition. May it open the doors for me between this world and the Otherworld. May it remind me of who I truly am and what I came here to do.”*

Seal your talisman: Hold it and touch it to a certain part of your body, like your heart or womb, or a part of your body that needs healing. You can also seal it with an essential oil.

Activate it: Wear it, carry it with you, put it on your altar, sleep with it under your pillow.

Be in relationship with your talisman. It's a door. Your work is now just beginning with it. Be aware of insights, thoughts, visions, images that come your way as you use it.



I hope these practices in Earth Wisdom, the Tarot, and Sacred Art bring you joy!

about joanna powell colbert

Joanna Powell Colbert, creator of the *Gaian Tarot* and the *Pentimento Tarot*, has been an artist, teacher, and convener of circles for over thirty years. She was named by *SageWoman* magazine as one of the Wisdom Keepers of the Goddess Spirituality movement. Joanna teaches workshops and e-courses on earth-centered spirituality, seasonal contemplative practices, creativity as a devotional path, and using tarot as a tool for inner guidance and self-exploration. She also hosts retreats several times a year.

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Thank you!