

FOUR HABITS OF NATURE MAGICIANS

OR, SOME SUGGESTIONS
FOR AN EMBODIED SPIRITUAL APPROACH TO LIFE

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LOOK, SEE;
LISTEN, HEAR; SMELL, SAVOUR;
TASTE, RELISH; FEEL, SENSE

DEVELOPING GOOD HABITS - LEARNING TO BE QUIET AND LISTEN INSTEAD....

There are no rules to being a nature magician; but there are guidelines, and number one is to keep turning your attention outwards, to just listen, see, feel, smell, taste, sense and generally notice the natural world. 'Taste' is definitely *not* a suggestion to try unidentified greenery on every walk; nature magicians respect nature, whose plants can both heal and kill. It's a reminder to include this sense with the others; to gather saliva and swallow; to check how the taste in your mouth is affected by the fresh air and green of the forest, if at all: to add to those other sensory impressions.

It is not difficult to achieve an observing, perceptive mien; it's the sustaining it that is the challenge. That's what magicians work towards. So almost every habit should be geared to making it easier to do that.

Considering the world we live in

When I first read the phrase, 'the world of tick tock'¹, it gave me a new understanding; it invited me to consider the time management of the way we live.

Clocks impose an artificial order: they exist to ensure that we're all working to the same timescale; so we will not be late for other artificial constructs and institutions - schools, work, public transport schedules... Of course, knowing the time in our own zone is very necessary for co-ordinating our mundane obligations. The trouble is that clock-time is just a *tool*, but we are subservient to it *as if* it, and it alone, expresses the true relationship of ourselves to time passing.

Our relationship with time is not an easy one. We're always running out of it, trying to catch up with it or snatch a few minutes; we're aware that time waits for no one, that time is money – no wonder we're stressed all of the time.

Imagine the world when we are not at the mercy of the clock. Think back to your last holiday. Remember getting up when you wanted; noticing time passing from the sun over the sea, or the rumbling of your stomach, or being surprised that it is so early/late, and snoozing just when you felt sleepy? That is the natural rhythm of life. It sounds idyllic, but it used to be our working reality. Pre-the industrial revolution in Europe and the USA, people geared their day to what they needed to achieve, without the benefit of a clock, and would rise or eat at different times to their neighbours. This is still true for farmers today, whose work rhythm is completely dictated by the natural cycle, and they adapt naturally to peaks of activity – lambing or harvest – and quieter times – traditionally late winter/early spring in Europe.

So, we are glad of the clock, to help order our lives day by day, but we can stop thinking of it as the only truth in measuring the passage of life.

Remember the last time you were bored; that hour seemed to last a day. And now think of your most exciting evening. You might have said, 'hasn't the time flown,' as you make for home far later than usual.

The result of obeying the world of tick tock unthinkingly means accepting the artificiality - of work, consumerism, being prodded by advertising, planning wonderful things but feeling vaguely unsatisfied with the present world - as reality and thinking it is the only way to perceive life.

¹ Coined by Stuart Wilde; see <http://www.stuartwilde.com/tag/tick-tock/>

Escaping a purely mechanical time measurement system means entering a more natural rhythm in tune with the cycles of the earth and our own biorhythms. We don't need to study these to be aware of them, just learn to be sensitive to how we feel, and to the day and night, the seasons and our time of life. We start by acknowledging that although we use regulated time for our jobs and responsibilities, there are many opportunities to follow what our bodies tell us to do, for we are creatures of the earth.

**We feel we are, or can, or should become, nature magicians;
We have a yearning to develop a different perspective.**

Walking, sitting, standing, being in, studying and making connections to nature, suffusing ourselves with natural images are all antidotes to many modern ills. They will gently allow us to change our perspective to a satisfying rhythm of life.

We are fast and frequently driven, unfocused, clever, rational and very shortlived.

The natural world is gracefully and exactly the right speed always, from the life of the may fly to the moving of the tectonic plates. Every aspect of nature simply is; we can say that its focus is simply to achieve its potential, and its life is geared to this. Rationality and cleverness are irrelevant in the slow life of the planet; it is working with the timings of eternity.

To be a magician of any kind demands a relationship.

Think of human interaction: we hardly affect strangers; yet a raised eyebrow may make a loved one furious. The deeper our relationship to nature, the more we can interact together in a magical way.

So many people think they want to do magic, whereas when they consider more deeply, they realise they want to lead a magical life; to discover magic in the everyday to transform their experience of life.

If this is describing the way you feel, here are some habits to cultivate, to keep aware of, and tuning into, the rhythmic life of nature.

These habits are simple; so simple that maybe you think they can't possibly work.

Be aware that thinking this is the rational mind in collusion with 'tick tock'.

WARNING: the message below is definitely bad for your spiritual self...

A typical message from the rational mind:

'Hi, are you really considering this???? Really??? It's not clever; difficult, big or sexy, is it?

If it's this easy, wouldn't everyone be doing it??? It can't be magical then...can it?

Use your common sense. Why not read another book, pay for the next class – or... come on, you're tired after work; have a relax: just switch on your TV, laptop, ipod/pad or phone and stay exactly as you are.'

Do you recognise any of this mind-speak? The rational mind aims to keep everything the same, so it can persist in being the boss. With practice, our sense of the adventure of new ways of thinking can gently balance its influence.

Just try the exercises for a couple of weeks and see if they allow your dormant, intuitive senses to arise, to bring balance and harmony into your life.

Practise now, by reading the following guidelines *veee—rrryyy sllloo—wwllyyyy*.

Habit 01 — Breathe with the natural world

Start practising using the old adage, 'Count to 10'. Traditionally used to advise people to calm down, it is actually a magical instruction.

Slowing down, being aware of breathing, and sharing your breath with the world, is the first step in tuning your relationship to nature and will impact on every area of your life. A frenetic lifestyle can make it difficult to slow down sufficiently to focus on breathing. Most of us are living too fast for magic, so that has to change. Slow down: now, and regularly and frequently from now on.

Try it now:

Focus on something of natural beauty outside, or through a window.

Relax into looking for 10 seconds.

Herein is the magic: it's postulated that focussing for 10 seconds is the time required to hardwire images into the brain. If this is true, doing it will build up natural memories to gradually replace any negatives that have taken root in your mind.

The seconds gently flow whilst you just appreciate what you're seeing. It will slow, calm, reorientate and restore you to a sense of being whole and complete.

Magical living means consciously acknowledging that you are a part of a living world and acting as if that is true.. and knowing that takes practice.

Exercise 1: On waking. First thing, every day, take slow breaths whilst looking out of the window/opening the back door. Focus on your chosen image, then repeat with another couple, for ten seconds each, and greet the greater world.

How? Just say hello. Out loud, to whatever calls to your attention - the swaying tree, the birdsong, or wind in the chimney. Greet it; wave if you wish. Quote a poem or pop song, whatever occurs in the moment, and keep it simple and spontaneous.

Do it sincerely, taking a real interest in what you're seeing. You are establishing yourself each day as a part of things, of the natural rhythm, and that makes you feel at home. Soon, you'll never want to miss it.

Morning:

Breathe with the world, with awareness, and say hello to something beautiful and non-human in the world of nature outside your window. Every day.

Habit 02 — Be Grateful for the natural world

Magical lore says like breeds like, and gratitude is the portal to seeing a million more things to be grateful for; to enter the world of wonder. Just as we can fall into the habit of feeling dissatisfied, so we can foster the opposite attitude. To start is as easy as finding five-ten minutes to slow down again.

Exercise 2: At noon.

In the middle of the day, when you're just beginning to feel jaded: when all today's good resolutions have been overtaken by today's 'stuff', find five things to be grateful for.

Get a beverage and take five minutes to yourself to count some blessings. Name them out loud. You are lucky enough to have the leisure to do the exercise, so there's number one.

Do not hurry; luxuriate over each blessing. Roll it around all your senses: feel the support of your chair, swallow and taste the contentment of the moment, and be grateful. Take a breath with your gratitude, breathe out the words, 'thank you,' and see them imprinted on the air. Then extend your gratitude field out into nature. Look out of the window and the natural world will show you something to be grateful for.

Whatever your state of health, mobility, finances...gratitude is an attitude of mind that is good for the spirit. The aim is to make it our default stance. Gratitude breeds reasons to be grateful.

Noon:

Recite your five gratitudes to the world. Take a few deep breaths of thanks that reach right down to the centre of the earth and up to the heights of the cosmos.

Imagine your gratitude pooling in a golden chalice in your heart, and breathe it out to the world.

Habit 03 — Develop loving relationships with the whole world

Love can have problematic connotations in our modern world. With the media emphasis on human romance – preferably between the young, with perfect bodies, and as an adjunct to an aspirational lifestyle - it has been sadly devalued. Tabloid, advert and reality TV ‘love’ means solely human and romantic love, with strong sexual overtones; ‘sex sells’.

Magical loving is a living expression of the flowering of our true relationship with the whole world.

Q: So how do we know when we’re loving magically?

A: We check with our responses. Practice now. Think now of the tender shoots in the window box; or of the grandeur of an ancient tree. Take your time and tune in to how you *feel*. Feeling love is as if our hearts expand. Our neck and shoulder muscles soften and relax. Our instinct is to smile fondly. Our energy is reaching out to the beloved, as if we are opening to include it in our souls. As if we belong together. So set aside a few precious minutes...

Exercise 3. Evening.

Take a deep breath and feel that you’re hugging your surroundings around you like a cloak. If possible, open a door or window to hear the evening bird song or wind in the trees.

Caress every aspect of your living space and wider surroundings with your mind, feeling joy and love. With gratitude, your loving relationships all interweave and meld together: simply relax and let your mind drift lovingly. Love any imperfections, knowing that you can work to make things better tomorrow. Then let those considerations go, and love all anyway.

Evening:
is hugging time. With every in-breath, wrap yourself in the warmth and comfort of your surroundings, and on the out-breath, imagine your love and gratitude pouring out and feeling the landscape also cloaking you gently. The sunset, the dusk, weave and settle around you and you are safely held.

Habit 04 - Cultivate Trust in the natural world

Being a spiritual being in a physical body comes with its limitations and challenges. That's how it's meant to be, so being a nature magician will not protect you from the vicissitudes of life. But you will gain a sense of perspective and support to get through them. Trust goes hand in hand with respect for the natural world; it is our responsibility to keep ourselves safe.

To keep tuned in, we cultivate *trust*; not that everything will go our way, but that what happens will be right - even though our perspective will usually be too narrow to see the patterns that we're weaving into the tapestry of our lives. Years later, with the wisdom of long hindsight, will be the time to have an inkling that maybe many things were for the best. Trust allows us to relax into *not knowing* and *not understanding* when the rational brain will stress itself in vain, unable to accept that it cannot find reasons for difficult times.

Trusting is difficult when life is hard or unfair. That's OK. Just allow it to be a difficult thought and try to trust and let it go: you can return to it whenever you wish.

For now, we relax with the thought that, whatever might be happening at present, at a fundamental level, the universe is beneficent; that things are inherently good by nature; and that life is 'on our side.'

Exercise 4. Night time

Breathe and connect to the wider, wiser sentient world. Look out the window, then sit and bring to mind the gentle darkness outside the house: it is your support whilst you sleep. The dome of the heavens, the depths of the earth, still circle in their appointed places; all is well. However the day has been, breathe and release all its tensions.

Night:

With each breath, breathe in the security of where you are now and sense that you are held safely. Breathe with trust to the cosmos, the myriad stars, the magical moon and the deep mysterious shrouded earth, with the life of the night creatures continuing until the next dawn...

Sweet dreams!

A FEW FINAL THOUGHTS...

NATURE MAGICIANS -

ARE FASCINATED BY THE WORLD AND WANT TO JOIN IN

SEE ALL LIFE AS HAVING SPIRIT

SEE LIFE AS A SERIES OF RELATIONSHIPS WHICH THEY WANT TO
STRENGTHEN

FEED THEIR FASCINATION WITH STUDY IN THE FIELD

KNOW THAT EVER-CHANGING NATURE IS CONSTANTLY FRESH AND
NEW; EVERY SUNSET, MOONRISE, EVERY EXPRESSION OF LIFE IS UNIQUE

MAKE INCLUSIVE STORIES TO CONNECT THEM TO THEIR
ENVIRONMENT

LOVE THE ADVENTURE! - WHY NOT JOIN THEM?

