

Replenishing the inner wells

Medicine Walking

by Luea Ritter



A Medicine Walk is a conscious time for diving deep into a specific question, to enter a state of deep listening and to be in touch with nature as a powerful mirror.

You are invited to explore your relationship to nature and to your life's journey through the medium of open time and unplanned travel in a natural place. A Medicine Walk is often also called a 'little vision quest'. It's a way of receiving 'medicine' in and from nature. Medicine here refers to something that supports you. This can be in the shape of deeper clarity, more ease, a sense of support, new, intriguing questions, etc. Medicine can come in many forms and shapes and it's up to us to be receptive and welcome it.

It's a process that can help us to reach deeper insights on a purpose we are engaging with, clarifying our intention regarding our private and work life and to listen from a deeper place to the roots of motivation to do what we do in the world.

You will take a specific question with you or carry a specific task into your Medicine Walk. Beyond that, your Walk is essentially aimless, with no particular goal in mind. The question or task you take will vary with your own needs, but we have found that the more clearly you can articulate the purpose of your Walk, the more profound its results can be. Spend time before the Walk clarifying its purpose for you. This is not just a day hike, it is a ceremony of sorts.

HOW

The Medicine Walk is a process with a definite beginning and ending. These two points should be marked with a form of ceremonies. The ceremonies will express your willingness to make the most of this experience and your respect for the power of this form. They will focus your attention on the present.

- **Beginning:** With a question, set intentionally, we step over the threshold. This can be a line you draw in the grass or sand, a stone or wood that you see, or even an imagined threshold. With that, you mark that you have entered the Medicine Walk, entering a slightly different way of perceiving and

being in dialogue with your surroundings and using them consciously as your mirror.

- **During:** While being on the Medicine Walk, practice being in silence – meaning not engaging with other human beings in conversations. Other than that, just walk, wonder and wander. Pay attention to what you pay attention to, which elements speak to you.
- **Returning:** Step again over the same threshold when coming back, to mark that you end your journey for now. After your return from the Medicine Walk, there is ideally a space prepared with others to share your story and be listened to. This is an important factor as you going on the Medicine Walk of course for yourself but also for the system you are part of. Being listened to and witnessed, even by just one person, is a powerful support of what has happened 'out there'.

Especially for people who work in the fields of social change and transformation, going on a Medicine Walk can be a way of realigning purpose and action, replenishing the inner wells and sharpening the focus and intention of the work in the outer.

Doing it regularly – once to several times a year – can be a beautiful form of personal caretaking.

WHERE

Choose an area where you can wander safely without concern for getting lost or disturbed. Heavily wooded areas, steep mountain slopes, or areas with many cliffs are to be used only with caution due to the risks of getting lost or falling. If you are relatively new to walking alone in natural areas, stay close to prominent landmarks and don't get off the marked hiking paths.

THE BACKGROUND

Australian aborigines go on walkabouts, Thai monks conduct



Pay attention to ... which elements speak to you.

prayer walks through the jungle, Native Americans fast on vision quests, and the ancient Celts walked the hills, staff in hand. Around the world, pilgrimage is profound practice. People from all these different cultures found guidance, healing, inspiration, and connection with spirit on their walks.

Medicine Walks are practiced in different tribes and indigenous groups across the world and for some they also use the medicine wheel (South, West, North, East) as a way of deeper inquiry and orientation of what nature – tangibly and subtly – is speaking and offering as medicine/information. The medicine wheel, its directions and colours, have been interpreted differently by different tribes and corners of the world. We suggest you use the one that resonates most with you if that's a way that feels supportive to you. Here a few examples.

TIME AND MATERIALS:

- A Medicine Walk can take different lengths depending on the depths you want to reach. It can be from 1.5h up to 12h – for example from sunrise to sunset – or longer.
- Dress according to weather and the area you are in.
- Some people like to fast in this time. If you do decide to bring food, keep it simple, such as a piece of fruit. In any case, be sure to drink plenty of water.
- You can take a notebook with you if writing is your medium to generate clarity.
- It can be supportive if you have people or someone that says

good-bye to you as well as welcoming you when you come back, and listens to your story. That is because often when telling our story to someone we trust, other layers of clarity can emerge. And if it feels appropriate for all, this person or circle of people can also give you a gentle feedback of what they heard.

'It's quite possible to leave your home for a walk in the early morning air and return a different person – beguiled, enchanted' (Mary Chase).

This article first appeared online with Collaboratio Helvetica (Switzerland), and is reproduced here with the kind permission of Luea Ritter and Andrea Bärwalde (Communication & Media Relations). Luea Ritter describes herself as a 'Transition Process Steward, Action Researcher and Systemic Thinker and Sensor'.



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It is worth noting that this article was not written from a specifically Christian perspective, and quite possibly not even a religious one. Its inclusion here, though, rests on its merits as a piece that might encourage reflection and useful food for thought. There is of course ample scope to adapt this advice if anyone feels it should carry a more distinctive Christian flavour, by including elements such as (for example) prayer and Bible journaling. Readers of **accord** are warmly invited to submit feedback on this genre of healing and therapy.