

In shamanic cultures children were initiated into the practice of shamanism after they went through their rite of passage ceremony. The belief has been that children are already so immersed in the non-ordinary realms they need to learn how to ground and also learn certain life skills. It is understood that once a child reaches puberty typically they lose contact with the unseen realms and this is the time to reintroduce them to the world of spirits.

What I have found is that in the Western world the doors between the visible and unseen realms are closing very early for children. Between TV and devices children are not having the opportunity to be children or immerse themselves deeply in the unseen realms and talk to fairies and spirits. Of course there are many exceptions to this.

The statistics on how many girls are becoming anorexic at 3, 4, or five years old is an example of children who are lost in what the media thinks and no longer inhabit their own inner world.

In the 1990s I started to write a book with a friend of mine in Santa Fe who is a psychologist specializing in working with children. We both worked with shamanic practices to heal children and also taught them how to journey. I wanted to write a book on how parents could perform ceremonies with their children. The topic was too far ahead of its time, and we could not find any interested publishers to publish the book.

I asked my friend at what age did she feel journeying should be introduced to children and her response was as soon as they can talk. And I do work with children at very young ages.

Parents can help their children maintain this connection with their inner visionary ability by doing things as simple as keeping the conversations going about their child's imaginary friends. Or they can even lead their children into a journey to find an animal friend who protects them in life.

Many years ago a brilliant shamanic practitioner brought her nine-year-old son, Matt, to me. A teacher in school was being emotionally abusive to him. I taught Matt how to find what I called his animal friend. His animal friend filled him with power so that he did not take on the abuse of his teacher, and so that

he had the confidence to take on a new activity, which was tennis. He ended up becoming a great tennis player.

Matt never lost touch with this helping spirit or the non-ordinary realms. An extraordinary man who is now a parent of two, he is well balanced and a brilliant man who has is making a difference in the world—and he is definitely a strong member of the transformational community.

Matt's story is one of many stories of the positive effects of teaching a child how to journey when he or she is facing life challenges. When I teach children how to journey, I only drum for about three minutes. I then tell children to close their eyes and look for a hole in the ground that they can enter into. I then ask them to find an animal friend who is willing to protect them and to whom they can tell their problems. When I create the return beat on the drum, I ask that they say good-bye to their animal friend and come back.

After a few minutes of journeying, most children come back and talk for a half hour about all that happened on that journey.

I have received so many letters from young children who I taught to journey who are now parents with children of their own. It is amazing to hear how the practice of journeying transformed their lives.

In the early 1990's I taught a one-day workshop in Salt Lake City for six year olds. Some of my students there wanted to teach their children how to journey, but did not feel comfortable teaching it to them themselves. So I agreed to teach their children. A group of 7 children and their parents came to the workshop, and we made rattles for singing and dancing by putting popcorn in plastic cups and taping the cups together. It was truly a magical day, and what amazed me was how each child asked his or her animal friend what they could do in return for the help received. After each journey I asked the children to draw a picture of their journeys and to describe the picture to the group. This worked well as a way to focus the children on the help they received.

## Working with Children and Animals

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In my healing practice with children we often make little medicine bags together especially if they are dealing with nightmares. The medicine bag serves as protections they can hold or place under their pillow when they sleep.

Children are so attuned to energy that they know what I mean when I say I am going to pull an “owie” out of their body (an extraction) or when I am going to return a piece of themselves that they put in a safe place while scared (this is how I talk about soul retrieval with children). They help me while I am working and engage fully.

Children and animals absorb shamanic healing so readily. They don't have the egoic filters we have developed where the client can't truly absorb the healing as they question if the experience was real or if they deserve the best that life has to offer.

I find the results with children and animals to be exponentially magnified and often immediately.

If a child is too young to speak I typically work remotely. As having a baby squirming around my office is not helpful. I work remotely with animals too. I have had too many humiliating moments chasing people's pets around my office trying to blow a power animal or piece of their lost soul essence back into them.

In working with children and animals I still ask that you get permission to do the work. You can perform a journey in the Middle World to the child, pet, animal in nature that you want to journey for. I have explained the ethics of this and how to do during our live session.

I have success teaching teens how to journey if they are open to trying a spiritual practice. But many teens “slammed” the door shut between the visible and unseen realms and have no interest in opening up this door. There are teens who are just too lost in the collective trance and only care about collecting more material wealth.

With these teens I find such experiences like vision quests or learning how to survive in nature is the doorway in for them to desire learning spiritual practices.

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I am so deeply impressed by the hundreds if not thousands of students I trained who are bringing shamanic journeying into their families, into schools, and into the community, They have all found ways to do this. Many bring materials into school to make rattles and then lead dancing and singing to acknowledge an animal friend. Or they take children into nature and have them dance like their power animal. Some of my students simply bring drums and rattles into school and see what happens.

All journeyed on how they wish to introduce children into shamanic journeying.

And many of my students take my online with their children which is a truly magical experience!!<sup>i</sup>

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