

The symbolism of the pentacles in the suit of pentacles.

So I love to see Swords in a reading- they reflect the mind and there is so much we can do to support mindset with Tarot.

But I find the symbolism in the Pentacles fascinating.

Remember to go back to module one and remind yourself of the meaning of a pentacle.

Now. Let's start with the actual pentacles in the cards.

Let's start with a pop quiz, which Pentacle card has:

- Black pentacles
- A hidden ace (2 cards)
- A rim
- Pentacles in the shape of the kabbala
- A secret extra half a pentacle.

I'll share the answer shortly to give you time to ponder.

The simplest way to think of the suit of pentacles is all things manifest and physical.

Yes, they can (and do) represent money, but also family, home, community, food, all the everyday things that make up our life.

They can represent action- doing something (rather than being inspired, or planning to do something). The eating of a meal, the receiving of a job offer, going on holiday and experiencing it.

And they are magical because they remind us to be fully embodied in our life.

The first thing I want you to do when you see a pentacle card is look at how the pentacle is drawn, and how they are placed.

Back to my pop quiz;

- Black pentacles (3)
- A hidden ace (2 cards) (7 &)
- A rim (ace)
- Pentacles in the shape of the kabbala (10)
- A secret extra half a pentacle. (5)

Now let's walk through the cards.

Ace of pentacles

And there is our rim, the only rim in the deck. What does that mean? Well really that's up to you- but to me it is an artistic way of highlighting that there is another side to this pentacle. Remember Pamala Coleman Smith was a set designer- she knew how to add meaning and depth to her work. I see it is a subtle warning- yes something is offered, but based on the law of equal exchange- something must be given too.

This subtle warning in a card so loved by many is heightened by the lack of yods (the blessing) in the other aces.

I think what must be given up is clear when we look at the image- comfort and possibly security.

The garden we see represents Eden, with the lilies growing in the field.

The hedge has red roses growing in it, and we are urged to follow the path and walk out of this garden into the realities of the physical world.

A literal birth at times, or a rebirth. Leaving a place of comfort to take on a challenge will bring reward.

It can represent money coming in, but also a feeling of needing to do something to manifest, earn, or work with that money.

Two of Pentacles

Here it appears as if an individual is juggling with pentacles, perhaps he is dancing with them, or weighing them up in some-way. The shape of his hands has created an infinity symbol, even if it seems a little out of shape.

There is a (very) choppy sea behind him, with big ships sailing. And yes, his clothes seem a little odd. His hat is a replica of one from mediaeval times- is he needing attention (with all that red as well) because he is selling at a market, or he's an entertainer? If it fits the question its worth bearing in mind.

When I put all the symbols together my take is there is something difficult in his life right now (the storm behind him) and he has taken a break either to distract himself, or weigh up his options.

There is a playful problem solving energy about this card- the classic "rob Peter to pay Paul" where we are needing to move things around in our life to ensure everything fits together.

Practical action:

Pick a problem in your life. Write the problem down at the head of a clean piece of paper. Be concise, and take your time to write the actual problem as carefully as possible.

Now, take a break and do something enjoyable. Watch a comedy show, play a game, go for a walk.

As soon as you've finished sit down and write whatever comes to you about the problem, see if taking a playful break has helped your problem-solving self to kick in!

(As I edit this- I'd sat with the 10 of pentacles, read some books, looked at the card- when my daughter texted to say her bus was cancelled could I pick her up. As I drove, music on, all the dots were joined and I became very excited about my new understandings on the 10. A literal "2 Of pentacles" moment!)

Three of pentacles

The first question when you look at this card needs to be “why are the pentacles black?”.

I can't give a definitive answer to this- but I can share my thought process.

It looks to me as if this is staged in a crypt, or the foundation of a church. We have two other church cards (4 swords/5 pentacles) so worth reflecting on how they could be linked. The other cards have windows, so I would argue the lack of a window is purposeful- linking to the under the ground, foundation idea.

The pentacles have been carved out of stone, a hard and skilled job.

When I see these pentacles the links that work in my mind are;

- Working hard on your weaknesses to make them a strength-those black pentacles could represent your shadow self, or things you don't like about yourself.
- Investment- of money, or time. The foundation of a church is like the roots of a tree. They need to be strong, even though its likely not many people will see them. This might be spending time or money investing in training, health, or something in your life that doesn't give an immediate benefit but does bring long-term reward.

There three people in the picture, they remind us that life is a balance of work, spirituality, and fair exchange.

When my Grandad died, we found a book in his bedside table. He'd always claimed to be a very secular man, but each night it turned out he read a page or two from Kahil Gibran. I am minded of a quote from Gibran I have written down in my journal, “work is love made visible” This may not be your paid work- it may be a meal cooked, a lift offered, shopping picked up.

Along with the 8 of pentacles this is one of the two classic “work cards” suggesting a spread may be about work.

Practical action:

What is the one skill you really lack in life that would make a difference to you?

Consider your biggest weakness- personal, or professional, and consider how you could improve upon it.

If this feels too big, or too confrontational, then think about learning a skill you've always wanted to learn. To bake, draw, swim... or even pause to celebrate your hard work in getting this far in my Tarot course!

I want you to know that time invested in you is always time well spent.

Some years ago for me it was technology. I didn't have a website, computer or even internet at home (!!). Now it is definitely admin skills. I am not naturally organised, and struggle to prioritise admin. I am making an effort to prioritise carefully administration and learn how to do it well!

4 of pentacles

What is important in this card is where/how the pentacles are on his body.

Now different readers have quite polar opposite takes on this card, and its important you find space for both opinions so you can find your balance point.

I see a man who has taken a step back from the business of daily life to find his power, his boundaries, to manifest.

- The crown he is wearing shows he is sovereignty of his own choices.
- The pentacle is cradled over his heart (emotional connection to his vision)
- The two pentacles at his feet show he will put the work in.
- The stool he sits on is solid and humble- showing he is grounded and with out hubris.
- Many Tarot experts (including Crowley & Greer) link this card to personal power.

Yet other authors I respect describe a man "clutching" the pentacles, isolated from the world due to his love of wealth- and I can see that in this card too.

This is where the art of Tarot comes in. You need to reflect on;

- The question
- The other cards in the reading.
- Your intuition.
- How this card makes you feel when you see it in a reading.

To decide where on the continuum between miser and manifester this card lies.

Practical action:

Set some time aside, plan a couple of hours when you can really commit to this.

- Step away from your life. This may be as simple as switching your phone off, or you could go for a long walk some where remote.
- Pause, still your mind, allow yourself to hear your higher guidance (you could of course use Tarot for this! Allow yourself to “know” what it is you need to focus on your life right now.
- Feel in your heart what life would be like if you achieved this desire, this “need”.
- No write a list of practical steps you can take to make this happen. (You’ll find this demonstrated as a Tarot spread in the spreads section)

Five of pentacles

Ok. Its not a favourite card of many, speaking as it does of lack, loss, and not enough (financially, physically, emotionally).

But have you ever paused to notice the 6th pentacle is there- growing at the top? Now I believe Pamela Coleman Smith was a master at framing her cards, so I am certain this was a purposeful decision.

The pentacles are shown growing on a vine or tree of some form-this is a card of growth as well as lack.

And the next pentacle can be tantalisingly seen- just keep going, you’re almost there!

Some readers directly link this to the labour of childbirth, and this card can be a sign that even though its hard right now you are at the point of transition and are just about to start seeing the rewards for all your effort.

I can not get out of my head that the backdrop of the card looks like a curtain, especially if you look at where the snow meets the “wall”. Is this linking to the illusion of help the window represents, or am I reading too much into it?

The people feel to me as if they are determined to keep going, as if they have not noticed, or are ignoring that lit window. I feel there is a real essence in this card of rejecting help and carrying on regardless. Some times the message is this the right decision, at other times the warning is its time to accept (or ask for) help. As always, it's the question/other cards/intuition formulae that will tell you.

Practical action:

I was once told "a man who has lost everything is a dangerous man" and in its context this was probably true. But exploring what you would do if you had no plan B, no back up plan, nothing to lose is a useful exercise. I'd like to rephrase that- "A woman who can't afford to lose will find a way to succeed."

When I was offered a chance to be a personal student to my shaman teacher in 1999 I had little to lose, and lots to gain. My job didn't suit me any more, my marriage was unhappy, I'd never got on well with my parents. Having nothing to lose allowed me to say "yes" to a life changing opportunity.

Sometimes people ask me what my secret is for running a successful business. The answer is simple- I have no plan B. No parent or rich family member will offer me refuge or rent money. I need to make this work because its how I feed my kids.

People offering us support is a wonderful thing, but sometimes it keeps us safe and that blocks us from reaching our full potential.

So as a purely intellectual exercise. If it was just you-(and any dependent children/pets)-and you had to start your life over, what would you do? Would you stay in your home, try and find a similar job, are you happy enough to try to recreate where you are now?

Of if you had to work hard to reboot your life, no back up plan- but nothing to lose. What would you change?

[Six of pentacles](#)

The pentacles are placed in a very clever arrangement where they could be seen (depending on how you divide them) as a combination of 3's, 2's ace.

Now if we want to take a practical approach to this card then that could suggest a feeling of having worked hard and wanting to use the money well (3)

which has a really lovely feel- but we've already talked about the ace having a rim and a "price". And the 2 of pentacles has movement- that idea of an "exchange". So even from the placement of the pentacles we are starting from a concept of generosity has a cost.

It reminds me of an argument my ex husband and mum once had. My husband stated "There is no such thing as an altruistic act". My Mum then set out to prove him wrong- listing all the good things she had done. My ex-husband replied that the fact she was bringing them up as evidence in an argument proved she had gained something from her "good" acts.

It also reminds me of the phrase "unasked for advice is criticism".

There is ALWAYS an exchange. If you do something for free for someone, you ALWAYS get something in return. That might be a warm fuzzy feeling, a smile, a sense of contentment. This isn't always a bad thing, but I do believe it is true.

Now let's focus in on the coins in this card, rather than the pentacles. They are all being given to one of the beggars. Two are near the beggars hand, two are near the merchants hand, and two are retained in the merchants hand. There is a control of how much is being given. Is this a good thing? Depends.

Sometimes when we give something we need to hold something back. Perhaps an individual isn't in the right place to make wise decisions.

But when we trust someone, give them everything we can give and allow them to take responsibility- that is when the magic happens.

Due to my children and high rent costs, I get some help from the government. But it is dependent on my monthly earnings which HAVE to fit monthly targets. The money is helpful, but the way it is managed means I often have to choose between good business decisions, and decisions to please the government. Does it help? Yes. But not in the long run- it stifles what could be good business decisions.

I see a direct parallel between the 5 & 6 of pentacles.

Sometimes we are better off being brave, and cutting lose of all help. Because then we will have to make it work.

Because the 6 of pentacles can be money given by a generous benefactor- but beware of "charity to control" where the price we pay (even if it is feeling dependent) may not be worth the money we received.

Every card is a continuum- and this card can range between money given generously through to using money to control

Practical action:

This card can be more money orientated than others because of the coins in his hand.

Money is a tool, we use it to buy goods and services.

What could you buy that would really improve your life?

It could be a weekly cleaner, hopefully its this course, it could be a subscription to a book club, a gym membership, or storage to improve your home.

Make a list of ways that money could improve your life- and then try and put aside a little each month to use well.

We can use money emotionally, to distract us. Impulse purchases in the moment. Or we can purchase services and goods to improve our life.

One of my best purchases was a very expensive cordless vacuum. Every time I use it I thank myself for buying it! A job that used to take 20 minutes now takes half that. My purchase saves me time on a daily basis.

Invest in yourself- you are worth it. Money is a tool- invest it wisely in buying things that improve your life.

Seven of pentacles

6 pentacles can be seen growing (they are meant to be potatoes!) An ace can be seen between his feet.

The story of good investment continues!

And remember although we talked about money in the last card, this can also reflect time and energy.

The man has paused on his hoe to reflect on his crop. Some people suggest he looks bored- but in our action focused world is resting and reflection seen as a waste of time?

If we follow our pentacle narrative;

Hard work-3

Clear focus -4

Carrying on through tough times-5

Careful investment-6

Has now led him to a point where a streamlining and new clear focus for future investment (of time/energy/money) is needed.

“No good climbing up the ladder if you never stopped to see where it would take you. “

“If you fail to plan- then you plan to fail”.

If this is life then this is the point where you take stock of where your choices have bought you, and make an informed decision about how to proceed.

Practical action:

Take stock.

How did you spend your time/energy/money over the last month?

You might even want to go through subscriptions, streaming services and the like.

Do you “waste” time in scrolling, or do some jobs take you longer because you don’t have the right equipment?

Maximise how you spend your time and energy, to bring you the very best quality of life.

My booking calendar was purchased as a result of doing this exercise. I realised I was spending several hours a week booking clients in- paying for my calendar was worth it to save time.

Recently a client complained my booking system was in-personal, she wanted to book direct with me. I said that was fine- but the surcharge was that the cost would be 20% more to cover my time. She decided to book in via my calendar!

Your time is as important (more important) than your money. Check in regularly that you are spending it well.

Eight of pentacles

Like the 6 the pentacles could be seen to be organised in different variations.

I see this as 6 pentacles hung on the wooden post, with 3 pentacles not on the post, each of which seems to be in isolation so could also be aces.

So, a message of;

I took control of my situation, invested my time and energy wisely (6)

I focused on meaningful work (3)

And am aware to achieve anything meaningful will cost me in time and effort (ace)

So I am learning, practicing, and finessing a skill.

Practice is the missing ingredient for a lot of people.

I run a shamanic in person circle, have done for many years. A young man joined us, came along for a few months, then asked if we could meet for lunch.

At lunch he told me he was "ready". I wasn't sure what for, so he made it clear. For his "intuition" or the "missing information" as he was confused why everyone else getting a deeper connection than him.

I carefully explained there was no initiation or missing information. The rest of the group had been coming longer (years longer in some cases) and that is why they were better. More practice.

He got up and walked out, and I never saw him again. He wanted quick solutions, not easy answers.

Anything worth learning will take time and effort.

Practical action:

The 8 of pentacles is about learning, practice, but also about focus and being in the zone or in peak performance.

It is better to work smart, than work hard.

Reflect on your life- what could you do to allow your focus to be clearer, your time and effort more productive? (After all 8 is 2 times 4, and 4 is about clear focus and personal power!)

Here are some ideas that work for me:

- Keep hydrated, and have healthy snacks on hand.
- Stop every 20-30 minutes, get up, take a deep breath, move around.
- Monitor when you are tired or distracted- and rest for 10-20 minutes.
- Turn your phone off.
- Use the right background music/aromatherapy to help the focus.
- Know whether you like quiet or noise, early or late.

The biggest tip is to know yourself. Know what helps you- and use it. Know when you are tired or distracted. Better to take a 20 minute break and come back focused than push through and work slowly.

Remember this may not be your paid work. It may be for study, learning, or household chores.

Nine of pentacles

And there is again-the pentacles are divided into 3, and 6.

Take the 3, 6, 9 pentacles. Here we have a formula for success.

3: Learn a skill that is meaningful to you.

6: Invest your time, energy (and possibly money) well.

9: Stay focused and self disciplined.

I often see the 9 of pentacles as representing “monetising skills”. I would rather know how to make money, than have money behind me or be given money.

Like the analogy of give a man a fish and feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and feed him for his lifetime. I would always rather know how to achieve something than be handed a solution without understanding it.

The 5 of pentacles reminds us that sometimes easy help is a real trap.

The lady has the grapes of abundance behind her, and the two towers stand like pillars- this is someone who understands how money works, as the high priestess understands how psychic connection works.

The snail? The image of self-sufficiency, he has everything he needs on his back!

The hooded hunting bird? A reminder of just how self disciplined this lady has been (to train a bird needs total self discipline)

Practical action:

Get organised!

This is a card of resilience, organisation, self actualisation and success.

It is the mastery of living in the physical world, without sacrificing yourself to it.

Self discipline is key- and that is often easier to start with in the physical world.

Choose a room, or an area of your life (perhaps your social life, accounts, food shopping) and organise it!

Declutter- let go of anything that isn't serving you.

Organise for maximum productivity, ease, and beauty.

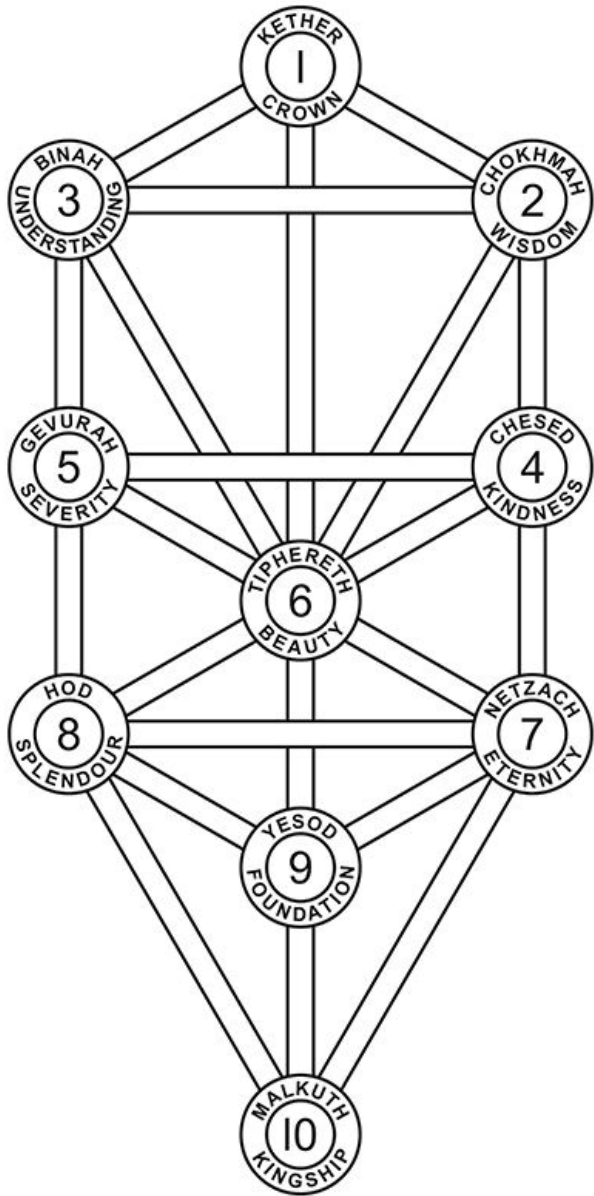
Simplify, organise, maximise all the potential in your life.

Just remember- start small. With your desk, kitchen cupboards, shoe rack in the hall. One small success that makes your life easier will inspire you to keep going!

10 of pentacles

The pentacles in this card are placed in the form of the Kabbalah- the Jewish tree of life.

I don't teach things I don't understand, so I don't teach this- but I have summarised some information from "Tarot and the tree of life" by a Jewish author Isabel Kleigman. Because if I want to read about a Jewish wisdom tradition, I want to read from some who has studied and understood it.



(Image purchased from Shutterstock)

This demonstrates the creation of energy from the Godhead (ace) through to the unconscious (9) and then physical manifestation (10).

The Kabbalah has 3 pillars;

Pillar of mercy (3, 5, 8)

Pillar of severity (2, 4, 7)

Central pillar of harmony or integration.

There are various schools of numerology, and the Kabbalah is only one- if this helps you understand the cards- then that is wonderful, but don't try and shoehorn your understanding into this. It is not a direct fit, rather another way of understanding the cards.

So why is the Jewish tree of life plastered on top of the most grounded and embodied card in the minors?

To remind us there is more to life than the physical manifestation.

If we see the minors as running in order of manifestation from the ace of wands to the 10 of pentacles then this is the "last" card.

Yet it has several symbols to remind us this end is simply a new beginning- as the world does.

The archway is a direct link to the archway in the ace of pentacles.

The Tower reminds us that nothing remains unchanged.

The black pole is a direct link to the Fool.

This card is no "end destination" merely another step in the circle.

The greatest lie told to mankind is that life is linear. That we are born, live, then die. All of nature runs on cycles and circles- why should we be any different?

Here in the last card of the minors we are reminded to start again.

Practical action:

I thought hard about this one.

And in the end my thought is to make, or tend to, your altar.

What is an altar? It is a physical space that you deem spiritual. It can be a tree, a bookshelf, a mantelpiece or a medicine bundle.

It can hold expensive and highly ritualised items- or a handful of stones that are meaningful to you.

There is only one rule. You need to tend it. This might be lighting a candle, meditating, adding small found items, or just sitting with it. Time spent with your altar makes it magical- not the items bought.

You may have several altars- a family one, Tarot one, manifesting one...just remember to tend it.

My “barns” altar. (the tray belonged to my Grandfather to hold the ancestors energy). We have a small dish of water to connect with the Norns.

