

Spirit guides

I believe we all have spirit guides, though we may have different names for them. And as a shaman they are our most important aid. We are working in their 'dimension' and trusting their advice is paramount.

Your spirit guide will not be currently in human form on this earth (I have heard of people using this as a control tactic).

Your spirit guide will not do you harm or ask you to do anything harmful to yourself or others.

Just because something says it is your spirit guide does not guarantee it is, and just because someone else has identified your spirit guide does not make it true. It is about building a bond with your guide, coming to know and trust them.

I believe we have spirit guides, I call patrons, which are a part- or reflection of- our soul. These rarely change, but it may take many years before you feel ready to work with them. They mirror yourself back to you, which can be a complex relationship, they come in when the time is right.

Around 17 years after my training with Shaun a Danish Stav man contacted me and asked me to visit to lead a sweat lodge. I hadn't worked within my lineage since Shaun and felt very anxious at this prospect. He started talking about my power animal watching what he was doing, a red kite. At this point the only power animal I worked with was a female deer- very much connected with my home and family. My red kite- who I love to work with now- represented growing into my role as a shaman. It waited until I was ready to step up. I needed this shadow part of myself- my core warrior self- to lead this sweat lodge. It was a challenge, but a life changing one I am deeply grateful for.

You will also have ancestral guides, possibly loved ones who have passed, allies (guides you just have a natural affinity with) and teacher guides (may be a tad demanding at times).

You may perceive your guides as animals, elementals, angels, deities, people from different times in history, plant or tree spirits, spirits of the land, lost loved ones, mythical animals...

How you perceive your guides will usually reflect your cultural connections (which may be ancestral, where you live, or a culture that is meaningful to you). My experience is your guide may have a human and an animal form, and you may work with these different perceptions for different reasons.

There is no hierarchy here. An angel is not better or worse than a power animal. It is just different, likewise a dragon is no better than a mouse.

- The first guide you work with may not be your 'true' spirit guide, or patron. That's fine you will probably work with various guides at different times.
- The only two rules are; Not a human living at this point, and it won't ask you to cause harm.
- What you experience is more valid than what anyone else may have told you.
- This is a relationship that needs investing in, take your time.
- Don't get frustrated if it takes time to find, or work with your guide.
- Be open to what your guide tells you to do once that bond is formed, don't work from ego and think you know what is right.

How to find your spirit guides

The simple answer is to visit your soul space and connect to whatever you find there. Taking the time to revisit, revisit, revisit and see if the same spirit guide is there over time. This is about building a relationship over weeks, months, a lifetime. Finding the best way you communicate with your guide and building that into your life.

Different guides will have different ways to support you. I often do Tarot readings and ask Frey (deeply protective) what he wants to say to me, and then Odin (always pushing me out of my comfort zone) and they can say very different things.

A spirit guide "feels" right, there is a recognition that it is appropriate, even if you don't want to hear it.

A spirit guide may be emotionally challenging, it may reflect a part of you that is repressed or that you aren't quite comfortable with yet.

Shaun had led me on a journey to a beautiful meadow deep in the woods. There lazing in the long grass was a man. He was dark haired, clearly just chilling, and breath takingly handsome. After some of the more complicated journeys I'd had this one was mighty appealing. I sat next to him, and he just smiled, so I broke the silence, "are you my patron?" to which he replied, "do you want me to be?"

I was confused- I thought this was a yes or no question. I reflected, I mean any chance to just laze in this meadow with him (and I knew he was Frey) was a bonus. "What does it mean if I say yes?" I asked after quite a while, "we have a great time, but you don't reach your full potential."

Damn. It felt like a test; I worried that if I said yes it might turn into some nightmare of a journey. I sat with it for a while trying to feel into the right response. In the end, "OK, I do want to find my patron, but can we still work together?"

His smile was like liquid sunshine, I can't express how his energy just felt like joy. "I will be part of the package, we will get to work together." And he stood up, walked off into the woodland as I felt the pull to reconnect.

I was fairly sure by this journey, and not surprised, that one of my patrons would be Frey's twin Freya. I met her several months later. I'd been focused on changing my name and had chosen Madelaine, content with my choice. I was walking along the surf, and Freya was walking towards me. A lunar side of her- silver, ethereal, fae. We stood for a few moments, and she told me, "Your name is Elruna". Now I must be honest, I spoke without thinking. "But I like Madelaine, I don't like Elruna." As she started walking past me, she turned, "you will". And I do.

Over the years Frey has been my main working partner. Hel & Freya are my patrons, but it is Frey I depend on.

I think it is essential to check in with your guide at the start, and end of a journey. And once you have built a relationship with them to trust their guidance on a journey.

Most of my shamanic journeys are for clients, journeying to a client's soul space to do whatever healing is needed. Working with Frey allows me to do this work safely.

This is how I connect with my guide when I work for a client, this may be radically different to what works for you. That is fine, if it works you are doing it right.

As I focus on my breath and start to enter a trance state, I find myself in my soul space, usually lying on a blanket under my tree. It is a beautiful space and I always feel reassured to be here. Frey will be standing, hold out his hand, and pull me to standing. I don't need this hand up- it's a joke moment between us.

We leap into a liminal space between souls. There is a pool, a stone throne, and either Hel or Freya will be there. Frey will dress me- the more robust the clothes, the more difficult the journey.

A light silk dress and bare feet- for when I work with another shaman who is currently on retreat and just wants support.

Most often a wool cloak buckled over my shoulder and tall boots.

Sometimes a full hazmat suit with wrists and ankles duck taped to gloves and boots.

I know I am in trouble if my face is masked. With a beaded head band that covers my eyes, a scarf wrapped around my mouth, and a hood pulled low. This means I am working with true black magic placed on my client by someone who knows what they are doing, and my identity must be hidden to protect me. Honestly it doesn't happen often, and I always get a small buzz of excitement when it does.

Then my sword is added to my outfit. It is a large hand and a half sword which I wear on a back-scabbard. This is a direct reference to an ongoing discussion with a friend about whether back scabbards as portrayed in the TV drama 'The Last Kingdom' are physically possible to use with long swords. It's an ongoing joke between Frey and I. There are rare occasions when I am not given a sword, which does make me anxious. If a client is very fae I will be told a sword isn't appropriate. On one occasion the perpetrator was so strong I was told they could identify me through my sword and told not to take it.

Fully kitted out Frey leads me to my patron, usually Freya at times Hel.

Sometimes Freya just nods, often she will give me something of use (a rope, light, pebble, dagger). It's a little like a blessing- letting me know all is good. There might be a word of advice, which is usually, "do as you're told this one is dark".

Then Frey and I leap into the client's soul space.

The first thing I do is look. I don't go in with an ego-based agenda, I pause and look. Then I connect with Frey to see what needs to be done.

This might involve cleansing various parts of the soul space, removing intrusions, journeying to bring back soul parts, or even past life journeys.

Sometimes I am protected, told to stand behind him, or even held in blue light to shield me from whatever evil is found. I have even been used as bait to distract an entity whilst Frey removes them – we work as a tag team, stronger together. Frey is older, more experienced, and in his native dimension- I follow his lead. I am a shaman because of my relationship with him, there is no place for ego in this work.

When the work is done Frey, and I head back to the liminal space. Here- and there is little ceremony- I am cleansed with water. Usually this is a bucket of water over my head, though sometimes I get into a plunge pool. Then its dry clothes, and a leap back to my soul space where I take a few moments to reconnect with my soul space.

You may work with your guide in a totally different way, as long as there is a check in at the start, ongoing communication, and a check in at the end then allow the uniqueness of your relationship to be the guide.

If you are working for someone else- what about their guides?

Every healing is unique.

Sometimes I work with a client's guides, and they take an active role in the healing. On rare occasions Frey may indicate I'm working more with the client's guides than him.

If a client hasn't built a good relationship with their guides, it can be harder to connect with them, and I leave the communication to Frey.

Usually, I experience a guide supporting my work but communicate more directly with Frey.

My constant is my relationship with my guides, I would always hope to connect with my client's guides- but don't expect to.