

Trance state

It's an elusive phrase, and one that is unique to each of us.

For some it will be a full body experience, ripping away all connections with this mundane world. For others it may be a subtle knowing, a feeling, a colour, a smell.

Don't judge your experience based on what anyone else tells you it "should" feel like.

What matters is;

- Can you choose when to enter, and have an awareness of when to come back?
- Do your experiences help?

Rob was a regular client, deeply connected during shamanic healings, and great fun to work with. In the journey I could see him wrestling with his father's toxic masculinity. Rob had hoarded the anger away in the corner of a cave. I was gently teasing it out, letting it go, when something sent a chill down my back. My guide warned me to ground, come out of the journey. As I opened my eyes, I saw Rob was sat up on the massage table, his fists were twisting the blanket. He opened his eyes- not seeming to see me- and started thumping the massage table. I quickly went back into the trance and led him back into a grounded state.

We talked it through- I had never seen anyone act out in that way, and we came to understand that as a dancer he expresses physically. We now work via Zoom to ensure we both feel safe in the journey.

I go limp in a shamanic state. In workshops when a facilitator has talked about belly breathing, or asked people to shake out emotion- if I am really deep I can't make my body move at all. We are all different, and that is OK.

The best way to start working on entering a trance state is to know what already sends you into that calm focused state.

Be careful about doing this work in bed, pre or post sleep. It can be easy to slip into trance work when sleeping. But you are not learning about control and may end up journeying during your sleep rather than resting.

Reflect, write a list. What do you already do to create that clam focused mindset (often referred to as a peak flow moment)? Classic examples include;

- Music- listening to or playing an instrument/singing.
- Sport, walking, martial arts, yoga, dancing etc.
- Craft, painting, making- anything creative.
- Being in nature, gardening, cloud watching...

- Doing anything physical where your mind and body are occupied. This could be driving (not the best idea), cooking, cleaning.

It is often easier to enter a trance state when your mind and body are focused, sitting still and entering a trance consciously can be done- but be prepared to practice getting to this point.

Music was my doorway, I would lose myself in music as a teenager and experience a trance state without really knowing what I was doing. In my early 20's I bought a Native American drumming CD, and started consciously travelling to it- unfortunately it was a popular CD, and I struggled to stay grounded in alternative shops that often had the CD playing.

In later years I discovered the Medieval Babes, their music took me places- and it was the main pain relief for all four of my births. I met the band several times and they said lots of women found their music helped with pain relief. The technical reason may be their music is written on the solfeggio scale which is a deeply healing scale.

I currently use binaural beats for personal trance work. Using headphones each ear hears a slightly different tone- the brain then creating a third tone which I 'hear' as a female voice singing.

I also find walking in nature, drumming, chanting and unsurprisingly shuffling Tarot cards creates that trance like state.

When it comes to entering a trance, the key is to layer what you know works for you- meaning at first you may spend an hour 'getting into the zone' before journeying. But the more you practice the shorter that preparation stage will need to be. I can switch into a shamanic state with a deep breath and a conscious thought now, ten years ago I needed an hour to allow myself to ease into that space.

When I first started holding my shamanic workshops in the barns, I needed to be there at least an hour early to adjust to the space. I would walk around, drum, focus on my breathing. Allowing my mind to settle- feeling my way into holding the space. I still like to do this- but I don't need to. If I have a Tarot client beforehand, I can walk up to the barns 10 minutes before and just adjust with breath as I put the chairs out. The practice over many years has paid off!

Consider what you already do that helps you enter the trance state, and layer it together before you journey- knowing you won't always need every step as it becomes a habit.

An example might be;

- A gentle walk in local nature, perhaps gathering some leaves or stones that catch your eye.
- Returning to light an aromatherapy candle and do some yoga poses/breathing exercises/martial patterns.
- Sitting with your natural finds, looking at them, holding them, then playing a recorded journey and allowing your focus to shift.

Ritual Tools

I'm not a big believer in ritual tools; at some point you will find yourself needing to work and your tools won't be with you.

It can help to have a tool/crystal/piece of jewellery/item of clothing/scent that you associate with journeying. When you start to prepare to enter a trance state you utilise your tool (or prop is probably a better word). Put on the robe or pendant, light your smudge stick, hold your crystal. And when you are grounding at the end- you put away your tool with gratitude.

Over time, with practice just picking your tool up will help you move into a trance state. My biggest tool in this way is my Tarot cards. Shuffling immediately calms me and shifts my mind into a calm state. I often shuffle when teaching Tarot as it helps me stay in that 'flow' state.

Try to pick something you can have in a bag or ritual medicine pouch, each time you are deeply relaxing reach for it, weave it into your state of deep relaxation.

Remember, as a shaman the key is to be able to consciously enter a trance state, then ground and integrate the experience.