

WINTER SOLSTICE RITUAL

*The Winter Solstice is one of the major turning points of the year, marking the beginning of the season of Winter in the northern hemisphere. Since the Summer Solstice, the days have been growing shorter. The Winter Solstice marks the longest and darkest day of the year, but also the beginning of the return of the light. Each day after the Winter Solstice will be slightly longer and each night slightly shorter until we reach the pinnacle once again at the Summer Solstice in June, the longest day of the year. **If you'd like to conduct your ritual with a group, I've provided additional instructions in red.***

- 1. Gather symbols of winter.** Collect a few items that symbolically represent winter (a bowl of ice cubes, pine cones, bells, mistletoe, gingerbread ornaments, paper snowflakes, candles, etc.). Consider harvesting a few branches from pine trees, holly bushes or other evergreens. If you do, be sure to ask each tree or bush before cutting any part of it, and listen with your heart for an answer – some may not be ready; others will be happy to be chosen. *Each person should bring something to the ritual.*
- 2. Prepare a space.** If you have an altar, greet your altar and honor your sacred items. If you don't have an altar, find somewhere comfortable where you won't be disturbed. Gather a few items to make your ritual space special (such as a rug or pillow, items to represent the four elements, crystals, stones, etc.). Arrange the items you gathered to represent Winter upon your altar or in your ritual space. [Click here for instructions on Creating an Altar](#). Light a candle. *Sit in a circle and place the items you've brought in the center. If you're conducting your ritual in a space that has a woodstove or fireplace, consider starting a fire to represent the beginning of the return of the light and heat.*
- 3. Perform a cleansing ritual.** Burn sage or diffuse essential oils to clean your space. Play high vibrational music, strike a crystal bowl or bells, or tone with your voice. Consider taking a bath beforehand and dressing in white, green, red or gold or *let each person wash their hands in a sink or dip their fingers in a bowl of water that can be passed around the circle as a purification ritual.*
- 4. Create a sacred container.** *If you're conducting your ritual with a group, one person can guide the group, but everyone should also individually connect with the earth and sky. For the invocations, one individual can say them, several can share the task, or everyone can say them together. Each person should also feel how their hearts sit in the center of it all. You can also connect each of your hearts to each other by imagining sending a line of light into the center of your circle...oftentimes, this happens without any conscious effort. Hold hands if you like.*

Connect with Mother Earth and the Divine Feminine by sending love from your heart down

into the Earth. Connect with Father Sky and the Divine Masculine and all the heavenly guides and guardians by sending love from your heart up into the sky and the heavens.

If you've created your own invocations for calling in balancing energies as discussed in the [Creating Sacred Space](#) ritual, speak them now. As you speak each invocation, consider lighting a candle to honor each balancing point. If you haven't written your own invocations, try these:

- *I call upon light and air at the east, the direction of springtime and the rising sun.*
- *I call upon light and fire at the south, the direction of summer and the noon-day sun.*
- *I call upon light and water at the west, the direction of fall and the setting sun.*
- *I call upon light and earth at the north, the direction of winter and midnight.*

Feel how your heart sits in the center of everything. Everything meets in your heart.

5. **Speak your intentions.** Acknowledge why you've come (such as "I/we come today to honor the passing of one season to the next, to release what no longer serves me/us, and to enter more deeply into my/our own inward journey(s)"). Ask your guides, ancestors, guardians and angels to assist and support you in the deep, internal journey that lies ahead.

6. **Practice stillness.** Winter is a time for rest and reflection. The natural world slows down. Animals withdraw to their dens to rest and wait. Plants die back, retreating into their roots. It's a time for slowing down, stillness, and being present with yourself. Spend a few minutes thinking about how you can create more time and space in your life for resting. Are there places in your day already where you could stop and simply be still and rest for a few minutes? If not, figure out how to carve out a few minutes for relaxation and personal reflection. Give yourself the gift of unstructured time...time where you don't have to "do" anything, but can simply "be."

There's a point within you that's always still. It's the place of wisdom and where "the still, quiet voice" of your knowing arises from. In Winter, the world withdraws into itself, coming back to this still point, like a pause between breaths. In Winter, we enter the void, which is both empty and full.

Honor and connect with that still point within you now by spending a few minutes mindfully breathing. You can do this practice with your eyes closed in silence or you can choose something for your mind to focus on like a candle flame or a steady drum beat. Feel how the breath enters your body, expanding your lungs and filling your body with fresh air and energizing prana. Feel how it leaves your body, taking with it what you no longer need. Pause for a second in the complete stillness that exists between breaths before breathing again. This is the void space that is both empty and full.

As thoughts come in, simply notice them, and bring your attention back to your breath. Afterwards, you may want to spend a few minutes journaling about your experience or writing down any guidance that may have arisen from that quiet space. *In a group, consider setting a timer so you all can participate, or have someone play a slow, steady drum for a designated period of time. Afterward, you may spend a few minutes sharing your experiences, or simply allow your experience to be what it is – a gift to yourself.*

7. Extend gratitude and close your ritual. When you're ready to close your ceremony, thank the elements and the directions, the Earth, your guides, guardians, and ancestors. Extinguish your candles or fire and end by offering your blessings "for the highest good of everyone."

8. Create a solstice wreath or other decoration. When the ritual is complete, consider using the items you gathered from nature to decorate your home. Pine or other evergreen branches can be tied together with a ribbon or fixed to a metal ring to create a wreath. Let these gifts of nature be a daily reminder of the cycle of life....birth, growth, decline, death....as we dive deeply into the void space of Winter.