

SAMHAIN/ALL HALLOWS EVE

*Samhain or All Hallows' Eve is one of the cross-quarter days of the year, falling between the Fall Equinox and the Winter Solstice. Many cultures celebrate it October 31st/November 1st, though others observe the cross-quarter closer to the actual midpoint, around November 7th. Samhain is a day for acknowledging death as an important part of life, for remembering loved ones and for honoring ancestors. **If you'd like to conduct your ritual with a group, I've provided additional instructions in red.***

1. **Gather symbols of Fall.** Collect a few items that symbolically represent fall and endings (dried leaves, seed pods, corn husks, acorns, dried flowers, bare branches, etc.). To honor your ancestors, gather photos, heirlooms, or other mementos of deceased family members, friends and pets, along with a few votive candles. *Each person should bring these items 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, candles, crystals, stones, etc.). Arrange the items you gathered to represent Fall and the photos or mementos of your ancestors upon your altar or in your ritual space. [Click here for instructions on Creating an Altar.](#) *Gather in a circle and place the items you've brought in the center.*

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, gold, orange or black. *Have each person wash their hands in a sink before entering the circle, or dip their fingers in a bowl of water with some essential oil 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 for this next part, 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 and all the earthly guides and guardians 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. Breathe deeply. Everything meets in your heart.

5. **Speak your intentions.** Recite a prayer or poem, or simply acknowledge why you've come (such as "I/we come today to honor the turning of the wheel, to acknowledge the importance of death as a part of life, to release what no longer serves me/us and to honor those who have gone before me/us").

6. **Honoring the Ancestors.** Light candles as you speak the name of each ancestor or loved one you'd like to acknowledge, honoring their memory and wishing them well. Thank them for being a part of your life. Ask them to assist and support you in your life, until the day when you will see them again. *Each person may light a candle as they speak the names of their ancestors or loved ones and thank them for being a part of their lives (such as, "Dad, I thank you for all you taught me and for being a part of my life; Grandma Mary, I honor and bless you, thank you for sharing my life," or "to all my dearly departed ancestors and friends, thank you"). This may be done aloud, one at a time going around the circle, or everyone can light a candle set before them and silently honor their ancestors in their own way.* Spend a few minutes in silence, listening for any messages your ancestors and loved ones may want to share with you.

7. **Honoring death.** All things must come to an end. Without death, there could be no birth, and the cycle of life would be incomplete. Yet, we oftentimes resist death, by either refusing to think about it, or worrying ceaselessly about it. This denies the very nature of life, for life and death are two forces that cannot be separated from each other. By refusing to think about death, we make it impossible to see life for the treasured miracle that it is. The life force flows through each of us for only a measured period of time. It's precious and fleeting. Honor this truth, and it will change the way you think about everything and everyone. Don't wait for the hand of death to touch you to acknowledge it and the value of life. This is the most difficult way to honor death. Live with the reality of death, and your life will be full of magic. Deny it, and the heaviness of what you're denying will lie heavily upon you, robbing you of the opportunity to live as if there were no tomorrow.

Take a moment to acknowledge, accept and honor the force of death as a part of your experience. Death cannot be denied or controlled. We can only surrender to it, trusting its wisdom, and opening to the unseen world that lies beyond its gate. Symbolically release and surrender to this immutable force by wrapping yourself in a black sheet, blanket or shawl. Lay down and close your eyes. Imagine you're sinking into the cool, dark Earth. Breathe slowly and deeply, resting in the peace of complete surrender and release. *In a group, one person can softly beat a drum or tone a bell for a predetermined amount of time, slowing the rhythm down until it comes to a complete stop. Then sit for a minute in complete silence, practicing surrender.*

8. Extend gratitude and close your ritual. Thank the elements and the directions, the Earth, your guides, guardians, and ancestors. Extinguish your candles and end by offering your blessings "for the highest good of everyone."