



Creating a

Healing Ritual

after surgery or procedure

... you know that you are a hel

Dear Fertility Sister,

I see you. Welcome to the tribe of women whose bodies have been poked, prodded and cut in the seeking of new life.

Surgical and other invasive medical procedures, while intended for your health and well-being, can often be experienced as traumatic if you are the one going through the procedure. It is not uncommon to experience a sense of loss, whether it be a loss of control, loss of a hope or dream, loss of a body part, or loss of identity as a healthy and whole person. Meaning can be difficult to come by in the face of this kind of grief and disorientation.

Medicine has its origins in religion and spirituality but over time has become more and more disconnected from where it came. Rituals are often seen as archaic and having no place in the medical field, yet may serve an important role in the journey from illness to health. A ritual can be defined as,

...actions done in purposeful ways that symbolize something much more than the acts themselves. Rituals are made up of actions that represent ideas, thoughts, myths, or beliefs about a particular thing. Rituals give purpose to action and always serve to connect us to something else, generally something greater than our own solitary selves (Karla Helbert).

A ritual after a traumatic event can help to make meaning in the face of chaos and aid in the reorientation process, the adjustment to a new reality.

Whether there is an obvious surgical wound or bleeding as evidence of an internal procedure that has taken place, an incision or puncture is often necessary to investigate the inner realm and remove or heal damaged tissues. While this may be experienced as invasive or traumatic, a ritual may help to heal by shifting the meaning attributed to the procedure or the scar. In some cultures, physical alterations of the body and permanent scarring are even seen as rites of passage. One way to understand a wound is as an opening or gateway to transformation.

A ritual is not a magic cure, but may be a helpful marker along the way. There is no right or wrong way to honour what has happened. Be gentle. Be bold. Be creative.

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References:

<http://www.greenmedinfo.com/blog/altars-and-icons-surgical-suite-sacred-ritual> accessed May 23, 2019

<https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/creating-rituals-to-move-through-grief/> accessed May 23, 2019



Ideas for Healing Rituals

Preparation:

- Choose a time and a place that feels safe to you, perhaps in nature, in your home, or in some other space that is sacred to you.
- Decide if this is something you want to do on your own or if you would like to invite others – such as your partner or a close friend – to join you.
- Gather together any items that you might need. You may choose to create an altar with symbols that are meaningful to you; choose colours that feel healing, things from nature that feel grounding or life-giving, religious symbols that hold particular meaning, etc.
- Prepare an opening and closing to mark the space set apart, such as lighting a candle, putting on some gentle music, ringing a chime, or bowing/putting your hands in prayer position.
- Take some deep breaths and perhaps do a grounding meditation to centre yourself.
- Set an intention, whether it be to release, let go, embrace, heal, love, etc.

A possible structure for ritual:

- Opening
- Releasing fear
- Acknowledge lessons learned
- Set new intention
- Ceremony, blessing or ritual action
- Celebration

Remember that simple can be profound and to follow your heart.

Ritual action options:

- Write a letter or a card to yourself or to a part of your body. Shower your self/body in gratitude and love for all she has done for you. Offer an apology if that feels necessary.
- Create a piece of art as a tribute to your self/body. One idea would be to sketch the wound and then decorate it with lots of vibrant, resilient colour.
- Buy a small gift or some flowers for yourself, to honour what you have been through.
- If you are marking a loss, make a donation to a charitable organization of your choice in memorium of the part of your self/body that has been lost.
- Light two candles. As you blow out one, allow yourself to grieve for what is no more. Then turn your attention to the one that is still lit and offer gratitude for all that you still have.
- Light incense as an offering of gratitude or prayer for healing.
- Listen to, sing or play a piece of music that has significance for you. Dance if that feels right.
- Once your scar has healed, anoint it with oil or lotion by rubbing it into the scar while reflecting on the transformation that this scar represents. You can also get creative by adorning your scar with henna. Or simply lay a warm, gentle hand over your scar, abdomen or heart and offer your self/body lots of love.
- Release a stone or other natural symbol back to nature, through burial or dropping it into a body of water, as a symbol of letting go.
- Claim your strength and new identity through an empowering yoga pose/sequence such as mountain pose, starfish pose, or a sun salutation.

Ritual word options:

- Choose an affirmation(s) that speaks to you. If possible, say it out loud.
- Read a favourite poem, blessing or passage of scripture that resonates as true or feels like the words you need to hear. The following are a few examples:

*The path before me:
may I walk it in peace.*

*The path behind me:
may I leave it in peace.*

*And the path within me:
O God,
may it be peace indeed.*

-Jan Richardson, *In Wisdom's Path*

Facing North (symbol of stone or crystal):

I call upon the Great Goddess of Earth and the powers of the North

I am Earth woman. Powerful, strong, embracing woman. Earth grounds me, feeds me, and roots me in her embrace.

Facing South (symbol of candle):

I call upon the Great Goddess of Fire and the powers of the South

I am fire woman. Hot, passionate, purifying woman. Fire touches me and teaches me to leap in my now.

Facing West (symbol of seashell or vessel of water):

I call upon the Great Goddess of Water and the powers of the West

I am Water woman. Fierce, tranquil, ever changing woman. Water quiches me, washes me, and drowns me in rainbows.

Facing East (symbol of feather):

I call upon the Great Goddess of Air and the powers of the East

I am Air woman. Fresh, light, soft, gentle woman. Air bends me, shapes me and fills me with peace.

-adapted from <https://www.hysterectomy-association.org.uk/alternative-health/ritual-for-an-operation/>



*When the light around you lessens
And your thoughts darken until
Your body feels fear turn
Cold as a stone inside,*

*When you find yourself bereft
Of any belief in yourself
And all you unknowingly
Leaned on has fallen,*

*When one voice commands
Your whole heart,
And it is raven dark,*

*Steady yourself and see
That it is your own thinking
That darkens your world,*

*Search and you will find
A diamond-thought of light,*

*Know that you are not alone
And that this darkness has purpose;
Gradually it will school your eyes
To find the one gift your life requires
Hidden within this night-corner.*

*Invoke the learning
Of every suffering
You have suffered.*

*Close your eyes.
Gather all the kindling
About your heart
To create one spark.
That is all you need
To nourish the flame
That will cleanse the dark
Of its weight of festered fear.*

*A new confidence will come alive
To urge you toward higher ground
Where your imagination
Will learn to engage difficulty
As its most rewarding threshold!*

-John O'Donohue, To Bless the Space Between Us

We call upon all that we hold most sacred, the presence and power of the Great Spirit of love and truth which flows through all the universe, to be with us to Teach us, and show us the way.

-<http://www.mysticmamma.com/new-moon-goddess-gatherings/>

I let go of all emotional hurts and negative energy connections, and breathe in love and beauty into my womb.

I let go of all guilt and mental pain, and breathe in love and joy into my womb.

I let go of what has been and the things I no longer need, and breathe in purity, goodness, love and peace into my womb and into the world.

-<http://www.wombblessing.com/docs/Archetype-docs-2018/ENG-Archetype-Maiden-2018.pdf>

