

FREE E-BOOK



IT'S TIME FOR a
LOWER-WORLD
ADVENTURE



THE THREE RAVENS COLLEGE OF THERAPEUTIC SHAMANISM AND CORE ANIMISM

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book

click to explore the relevant book from the therapeutic shamanism series

video

click to see the relevant interview on our YouTube channel

course

click to explore the relevant course

CHAPTER I



FINDING THE LOWER-WORLD

Shamanism tells us that there is another, deeper reality behind this day-to-day, physical one. The physical, everyday reality that we inhabit is made from information that comes from a deeper, shamanic reality that lies behind this surface one.

Whilst shamanic people live with the sense of both ordinary reality and shamanic reality being side-by-side, there are times when they choose to deliberately and temporarily immerse themselves more fully in shamanic reality; to enter one of the shamanic realms and go on a shamanic “journey”.



The physical, explicate, reality that we inhabit is made from information that arises from a deeper, implicate reality.

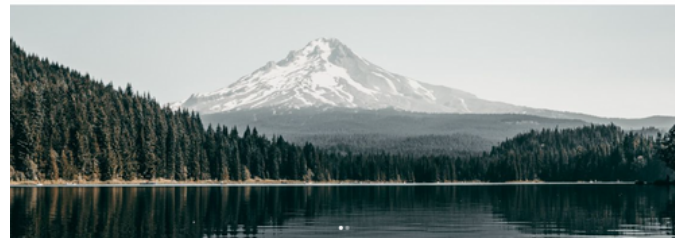
The Three Shamanic Realms

It is common to experience shamanic reality as being divided into three distinct shamanic realms when journeying. These are known as the Upper-World, the middle-world, and the Lower-World.

UPPER-WORLD. A place where we can go to get a bigger perspective on things; to 'rise above' petty concerns and problems; to get help with transcending our own ego concerns and limitations and to act more from our 'higher self'.

MIDDLE-WORLD. The place where we live and spend most of our time. It is here, this physical reality. It is the world of separation and individual identity.

LOWER-WORLD. In journeying, the lower-world appears as pure, unspoilt nature. It is nature as it was before humans have messed with it. It is a place of healing, and of the "Oversouls" - the original blueprints for how things are meant to be.



The shamanic realms are organised spatially. When journeying, we usually experience the realms as being organised spatially, with the Upper-World being above us, the Lower-World below us, and the middle-world being this world that we live in (and some more besides).

Each realm has a distinct 'flavour', which means they are quite different to each other. Each realm has distinct qualities, and different 'inhabitants'. Each realm needs a different set of skills from the journeyer, and a different awareness and approach.

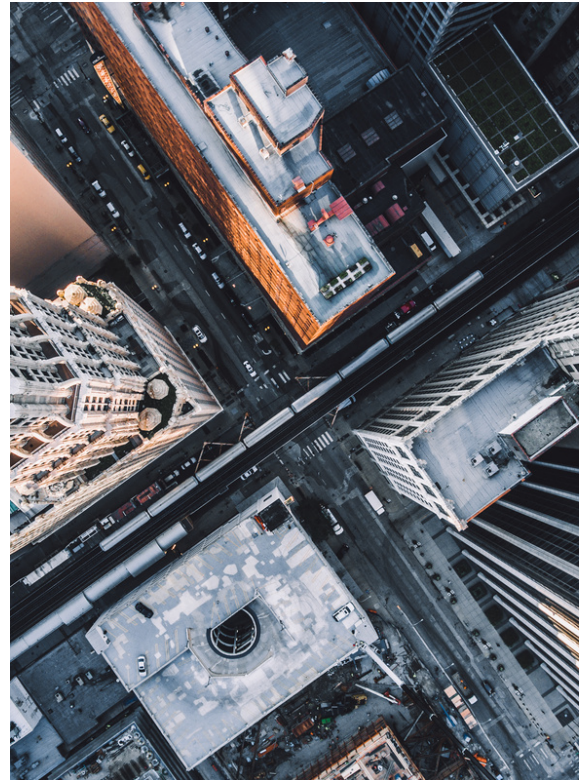
Learning to journey involves learning to recognise the feel of each realm and knowing what signs to look for to know which realm you are in at any given point in the journey.

The Middle-World has changed

Indigenous shamanic traditions usually do not draw the same kind of clear lines between the realms that we do in this modern approach to shamanic work. There are good reasons for this. In modern times, we have changed the middle-world. And in turn, the new, human-created middle-world has changed us.

THE MIDDLE-WORLD WAS ONCE A WORLD OF PRISTINE NATURE. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors, the original animists and shamanic practitioners, lived *in* nature, as *part of* nature, not separate from it. It's a different world today. While most of us live in towns and cities, even those of us who live in the country live in an environment that is highly domesticated (only 2% of the world's vertebrate biomass is still wild)!

THE MIDDLE-WORLD WAS FAR LESS COMPLEX. Today, the middle-world is full of all the human-created thought-forms of modern-day life. Hunter-gatherers didn't have to worry about things such as mobile phones, computers, the internet, bank accounts, television, newspapers, religions, political parties, school and exams, pensions, employment, consumer goods, and money worries. All these things have an energy to them, an energy that will be encountered and experienced in middle-world journeying, something our ancestors didn't have to face.



THE UNDERWORLD

On top of all these external differences there is the issue about the enormous underworld that we have created; the personal and collective unconscious full of unintegrated psychic energies that again will be encountered when doing middle-world work these days.

All this poses new challenges and makes the modern middle-world a very different place from the one original animists were familiar with, which is why these days it is crucial to be clear what realm we are in when journeying.

Recognising the Lower-World

In journeying, the Lower-World appears as pure, unspoilt nature. It is nature as it was before humans have messed with it. Although there are humans in it, the Lower World is primarily a place of connecting with other-than-human Peoples; with Animals, Plants and Stones.

HUMANS LIVE IN SMALL TRIBES

There are humans in the Lower-World, although they are few and far between, living as we used to live, as hunters and gatherers. They live respectfully alongside the other (non-human) Peoples, being part of the web of life. As hunter-gatherers, humans in the Lower-World generally live in small tribes of anywhere between twenty and two hundred people.

NO AGRICULTURE!

They live a pre-agricultural, shamanic lifestyle, as our human ancestors did for around two hundred thousand years before we started farming. So, in the Lower-World, there are no fields and no hedges. There are no domesticated animals.

NATURAL MATERIALS ONLY

There is no metalwork at all. Clothing is generally animal hides or very simple woven fabrics made from grasses or other plant materials.



Learn more about Shamanic Journeying:

book: [Shamanic Journey](#)

course: [First Steps Intro Course](#)

blog: [The Shamanic Journey](#)

video: [The Shamanic Journeying](#)

CHAPTER 2

LOWER-WORLD PRACTICES & TECHNIQUES



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Axis Mundi

Axis Mundi is a place where we start out shamanic journey. 'Axis' means centre, and 'mundi' means 'world'. So, the 'world's centre'. Or, more accurately, a place where the different worlds, or realms, come together.

The axis mundi is a place in this reality where the veil that separates this world and the shamanic worlds is thin, and so it is a place where it is easy to step between the worlds.

You may be surprised to learn that axis mundi are very common. They are all in nature, but all over the place. To find an axis mundi, all you need to do is think about a place in this actual world, in nature, that you know and like and feel good about.



It might be some woodland where you walk the dog. Or a favourite tree. Or a beach or some mountains, some hills, or a lake that you know and love. It might even be in a nature park.

It needs to be an actual, real place, not imaginary, as the whole point of an axis mundi is that it is a place that connects the worlds together, including this physical one. It is also crucial that it is somewhere in nature.

Learn more about Axis Mundi:

book: [Shamanic Journey](#)

course: [First Steps Intro Course](#)

Hollowing out is a process of stepping aside from our middle-world stuff as much as possible and from our own agendas, drives, beliefs and preconceptions so our Guides can communicate and work through us without all that getting in the way.



We need to hollow out,
or our journeys will be
coloured, driven and
distorted by our ego.

Only if we can step away from our attachments to our identity – the middle-world constructs we think of as being us (our name, gender, occupation and other roles, etc) – can we genuinely experience being something else, such as Yew Tree, or Panther, or one of the Stone People.

This is what shamans mean when they say that to become a shaman, ‘the past has to die’, or that we have to ‘die to the past’. The middle-world stories have to go. Or at least, we need to be able to step away from them when journeying.



Learn more about Hollowing-Out:

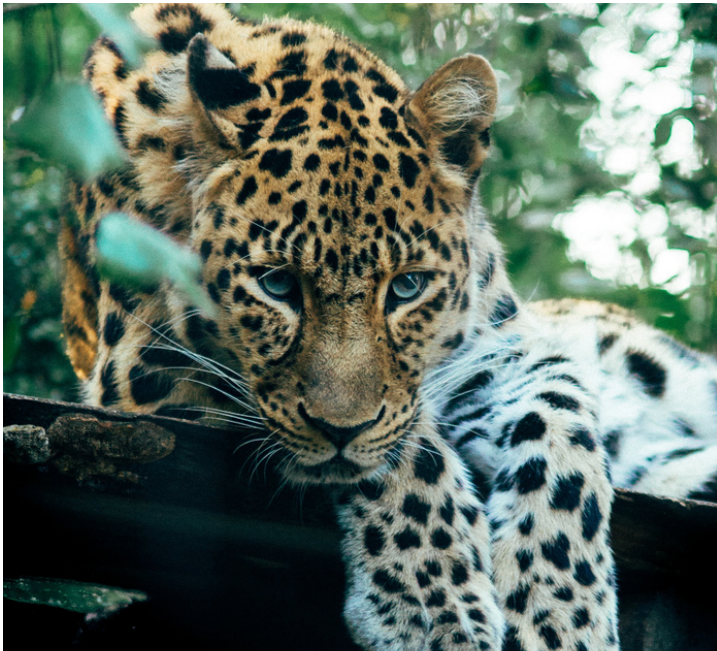
book: [Shamanic Journey](#)

course: [First Steps Intro Course](#) & [Exploring the Lower-World](#)

Your Power Animal is your most important Guide! It is not the shaman that does the healing, but the Guides. Shamans invite the helpful spirits to work through them. Your first and foremost Guide working through you should be your Power Animal. You are the apprentice, and your Power Animal is your principal teacher.

ANIMAL TOTEMS

If you choose to practice shamanism, you'll encounter various animals during your journeys. Some may only appear once, while others may be intermittent companions. A few might become long-term Guides, sticking with you for weeks, months, or even years. These are animal helpers, guides and teachers, sometimes referred to as animal totems. They are not, however, what we mean by the term Power Animal here.



Your Power Animal is Mother Earth trying to tell you that she loves you in a form that she thinks you might understand.

POWER ANIMAL

In Therapeutic Shamanism, the term Power Animal has a special and specific meaning. Most Animal Guides in journeys are like friends. Some friendships are deep and lasting, and others less so. All are different though to having a “soul mate”; the kind of lifelong, deep, intense, profound, loving, loyal and, ultimately, transcendent connection that we mean by Power Animal in Therapeutic Shamanism.

Working with a Power Animal is a crucial part of developing a shamanic practice in this approach. You find and retrieve your Power Animal by doing a shamanic journey.

Learn more about Power Animals:

book: [Shamanic Journey](#)

course: [First Steps Intro Course](#)

When doing a shamanic journey, the practitioner enters into a deeper, shamanic reality and personally experiences how everything is connected. However, in journeys, true power and wisdom come not from the practitioner themselves but from their ability to let greater, wiser spirits (their Guides) work through them. In addition to the practitioner's Power Animal, their Guides can include Human ones too.

Human Lower-World Guides are what shamans mean by Ancestors (as opposed to Middle-World individual ancestors). As such, they are representations of the Human Oversoul — the archetypal pattern that all humans come from.

While your Power Animal, of course, can teach you an amazing amount about connection with the wider-than-human community to which we belong, their perspective about being human is limited as they are not human. This is where a human Lower-World teacher becomes crucial.

Your Human lower-world Guide is simply a face that you put on Human.



A Lower-World Human Guide can teach you about:

- What it is to be Human, what your true Adult Soul is, and how to live accordingly.
- How a Healthy Human Tribe can teach you to live in the right relationship with other human beings and help heal your wounds around this.
- How to live in the right relationship with other Peoples and the other-than-human.

Learn more about Human Guides:

book: [Rewilding Yourself](#)

course: [Exploring the Lower-World](#)

The People of the Lower-World

blog

The Lower-World is the realm of Mother Earth. It is also the realm of 'the People' – Mother Earth's children. As well as us, the Human People, there are the Animal People, the Standing People (the Trees), the Plant People, and the Stone People.

Everything around us, every animal, from a lion through to something seemingly as insignificant as a worm, every plant, and every stone (not just gemstones) has a healing gift and things to teach us. All we have to do is ask. You can acquire this knowledge via journeying, research and other animist and shamanic practices.



BUILDING YOUR MEDICINE BUNDLE

When the other-than-human People make an appearance in a journey, it is good to reflect on it and do some research to learn more about their healing gifts and teaching.

You can work with the other-than-human People in various ways:

- Choose an Animal, Plant or Stone. It could be one that appeared in a journey that you wish to learn more about, or simply one you choose for some other reason. However you chose it, do some reading about it, and then journey to meet it and find out more about it.
- Journey to meet the People that live in specific landscapes. This teaches you not just about the individual species, but about how they interact with each other and with the land, and their place in the wider whole.
- Journey on the People that are native to the environment that your Power Animal is from. This helps you better understand your Power Animal and their place in the whole.
- Journey to grok the People of the land you live on and are a part of. This can be a powerful re-wilding practice, helping you connect to the land more. It can help you notice the web of life around you and begin to heal any disconnection from it you may suffer from.

Learn more about the People:

book: [Finding Your Deep Soul](#)

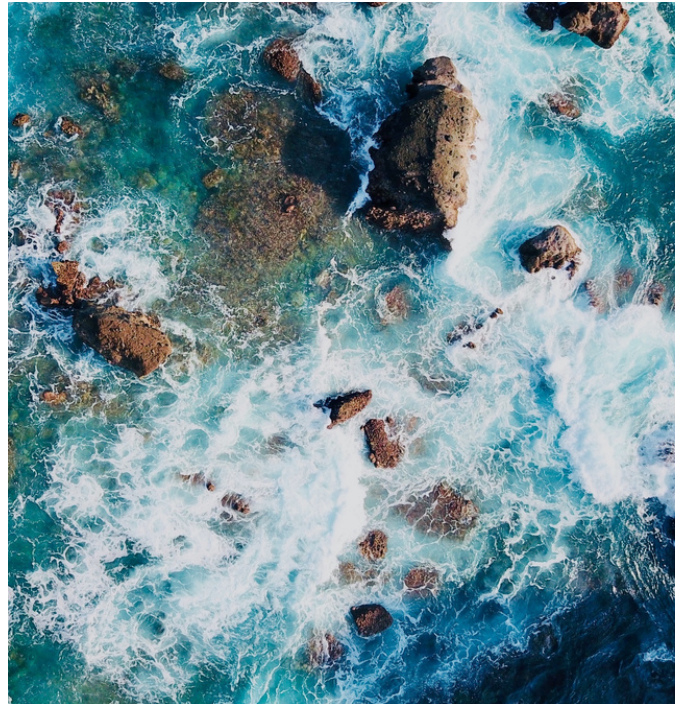
course: [The People of the Lower-World](#)

Working with Environments

video

Embarking on a journey into the Lower-World opens the door not only to encounters with Animals, Plants, and Stones but also to the profound exploration of environments - the Realms of Sea, Land, Sky and Fire and their connection to the five elements of Water, Earth, Sea and Air (and Ether).

As with everything else in the shamanic realms, environments are conscious beings that can be communicated with. So, in journeys, you can learn to work with the Oversouls of beings such as Mountain, Forest, Grassland, Wind, and even the Waves in the Sea.



THE HEALING GIFTS OF THE REALMS INCLUDES

SEA: Exploring the relationship between Sea and the Mother Archetype can help us heal grief and attachment wounds.

LAND: Exploring the relationship between Land, place in the world, and the Father Archetype.

AIR: Exploring the relationship between Air, Spirit, and the role of Bird Medicine in shamanism.

FIRE: Exploring the relationship between Fire as transformation, the Hero's/Heroine's journey and making the darkness conscious.

Learn more about the Environments:

course: [The Shamanic Worlds](#)

The 5 Elements: Air, Fire, Water, Earth

video

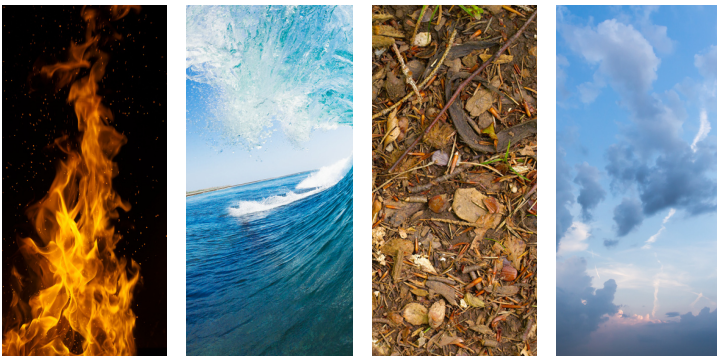
In shamanism, the five elements - Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Ether - are the fundamental building blocks of the universe, each embodying distinct qualities contributing to the composition of all matter.

EARTH symbolises realism, practicality, and grounding. It encourages us to embody a sense of belonging and safety, providing a sense of permanence in the ever-changing world.

WATER symbolises emotional depth and the fluidity of life. As Fire burns out, Water encourages perseverance and reflection and helps us keep going.

AIR symbolises inspiration and the breath of life. It encourages us to embrace change and new ideas,

FIRE is our personal power, pushing us to set boundaries, speak up, and stay true to ourselves. It brings enthusiasm and the confidence to tackle challenges, find joy and approach life with optimism.



WORKING WITH THE 5 ELEMENTS:

TRANSFORMATION PRACTICES. Shamanic practices where we work with the elements to experience being taken completely apart and reduced to something formless and then reformed again. In a sense, they are a mini 'death' and rebirth. They include weird and wonderful things such as burials, burnings, dismemberments, dissolvings, cocoonings, poisonings and shapeshifting. [Read more](#)

WHEEL OF LIFE. To come to life, everything must go through the elemental cycle - air for potential, fire for action, water for reflection, and earth for closure. Each stage contributes to growth. When feeling stuck, the Wheel helps us identify our place in the cycle and what's needed to move forward. [Read more](#)

TREE OF LIFE. Our energy system is also closely connected to the five elements. Understanding the different energy bodies (spirit, soul, mental, emotional, and physical), chakras, and their interconnectedness with the 5 elements is a key building block of any grounded shamanic practice. [Read more](#)

-----> **Learn more about the 5 Elements:**

book: [Rewilding Yourself](#)

course: [Exploring the Lower-World](#)

course: [The Wheel of Life](#)

course: [The Tree of Life](#)

If an illness has a shamanic origin, then whatever else is going on, the roots are always in soul-loss and/or Power-loss.

We wrote a lot about soul-loss in our other free e-book ([link here](#)), so we will focus more on Power-loss here.

Power-loss occurs when we cut ourselves off from nature and Mother Earth, disconnecting and unplugging ourselves from the larger energy grid of each other and of the more-than-human.



At its heart, our modern-day totalitarian agriculture says: *"We now own this land. We now decide what lives on it and what dies. You goats, you can live on this land, as we now own you and want to use you as we wish. But all you other species who compete with the goats, or who eat them, you now die. Wheat, you can grow on this land, but all you other plants, we will now kill you. For this is our land"*

Even if the symptoms are largely the same as with Soul-loss, because the cause is different, Power-loss cannot be healed by shamanic journeying alone. Instead, when there is Power-loss, we need to address its root cause – our disconnection from nature and from our fellow animals, plants, and even from the land itself.

↓

We heal Power-loss by
reconnecting to nature and to
Mother Earth, plugging ourselves
back into the grid and energy flow
of the more-than-human.

HEALING POWER-LOSS

Practical ways to heal this disconnect and “rewild our souls” is at the very heart of both shamanism and animism, and include:

- SPENDING TIME IN NATURE
- SHAMANIC JOURNEYING
- Connecting back to the shamanic realms, underneath the layers of separation and distortions laid over it by modern ‘civilisation’.
- POWER ANIMAL RETRIEVAL
- Bonding with our Power Animal (our most important connection to the more-than-human!).
- Besides *connecting* with nature, shamanic practitioners actively *communicate* with it, serving as advocates and intermediaries between humans and the natural world.



OTHER SHAMANIC PRACTICES

Both soul-loss and power-loss leave ‘holes’ in us. They leave our energy-body weakened. Much in the same way that a weakened immune system means that our physical body can become infected with viruses or other pathogens, a weakened energy body means that other things, ‘intrusions’, can get into us and cause harm. There are shamanic practices that help us deal with those:

- EXTRACTION involves removing the intrusion in some way, and then healing the hole or wound that is left behind.
- DE-POSSESSION The dividing line between intrusions and possessions is not a firm one. Broadly speaking, an intrusion is something that is in a specific place in the physical body. A possession is something that is not localised, but which is influencing someone in a more systemic way.
- DISENTANGLEMENT is the process of letting go of attachments that are no longer helpful or healthy or which we have outgrown.
- EXPANSIONS help us loosen the sense of individuality and separation.
- JUST BEING If we want to experience what it is truly like to be Plant or Stone, then we first need to really, *really* slow down. We need to stop being driven by lists of things to do, and instead of doing, just ‘be’.

-----> **Learn more about Extractions, De-posessions & Disentanglements:**

book: Rewilding Yourself

course: Deeper Explorations of the Lower-World

Finding Your Soul

blog

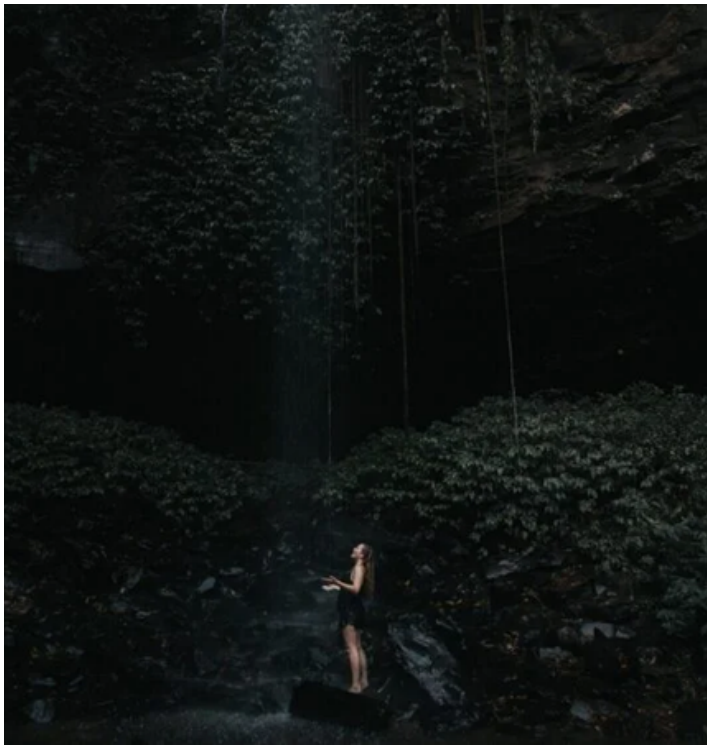
Our Soul is our truest self, our true nature. It is a part of us that is wild and free; part of nature; part of Human, of Animal, a sibling to Plant and Stone, and a child of Mother Earth. It is both who we truly are deep down, and the blueprint for what we are meant to grow into and become in the world and in this life.

rites of passage

Because they understood the extent to which humans can get lost and become strangers to our true, authentic Soul, all hunter-gatherer cultures had initiation ceremonies. Performed around the time of adolescence, these ceremonies were designed to shock us out of childhood thinking and help us connect to our true Soul.



Our Soul is of the Lower-World.
It is the (truly Adult) Human we
were, and are, meant to be.



In animist cultures, being an Adult meant far more than just taking on middle-world adult responsibilities in the tribe. Being an Adult (rather than just an adult) meant being connected to your true Soul. It meant knowing your true Human nature. It meant stepping up to take your place on the Earth as an interconnected being, a part of the web of life and a member of the great tribe of all the Peoples. It was only once you had done this that the tribe considered you to be a fully Human Being.

Learn more about Soul:

book: [Finding Your Deep Soul](#)

course: [Find Your Wild Soul](#)

THERAPEUTIC SHAMANISM

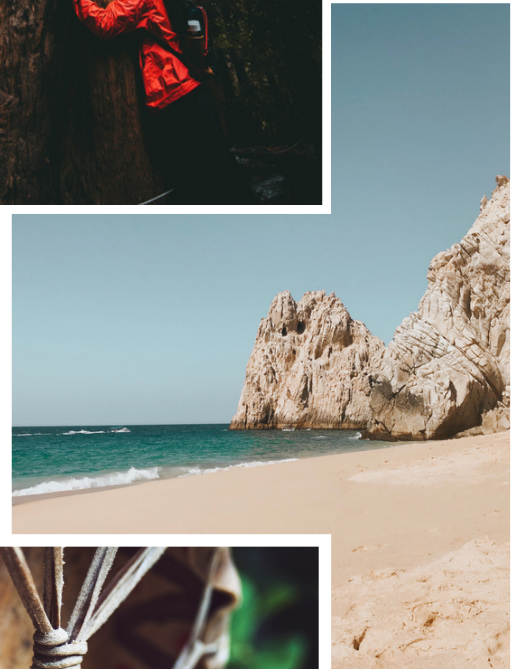
A branch of core shamanism

The anthropologist Michael Harner realised that, underneath the cultural trappings of a particular tribe's shamanic practice, there was a series of core beliefs and practices that are essentially common to all shamanic and animist cultures. These form the basis of what he called "core shamanism", and wrote about in his seminal book *The Way of the Shaman*.

As such, core shamanism (and the Therapeutic Shamanism that we teach) does not belong to any one particular culture or geographic region of the world. Rather, it is the birthright of *all* human beings.

Shamanism for modern times

For around 200,000 years, all humans lived in hunter-gatherer tribes, and as far as we know there has not been a single hunter-gatherer tribe in the history of the human race that did not practise shamanism (in the broad sense of the word). Then, 6,000 years ago, we not only turned away from shamanism, we waged a war upon it! So these days, as we witness the resurgence and growth of interest in shamanism, shamanism is re-emerging into a very different world from the one in which it originated.



Shamanism holds answers to many of the challenges we face these days. To make it relevant though, we need to find new ways to practice it and apply it. And this is fine, because shamanism has always been a practical and pragmatic form of spirituality.

In losing shamanism and animism, we lost our way. We need it back. Indeed, our very survival, and those of our fellow species, may well depend on it because, ultimately, shamanism is about showing us how to live in right-relationship with each other – with other humans, and with the other-than-human world too. However, in bringing shamanism back, we need to understand that we now live in different times, face different challenges, and so need to find new ways to apply it. Which is why we teach *Therapeutic Shamanism*.

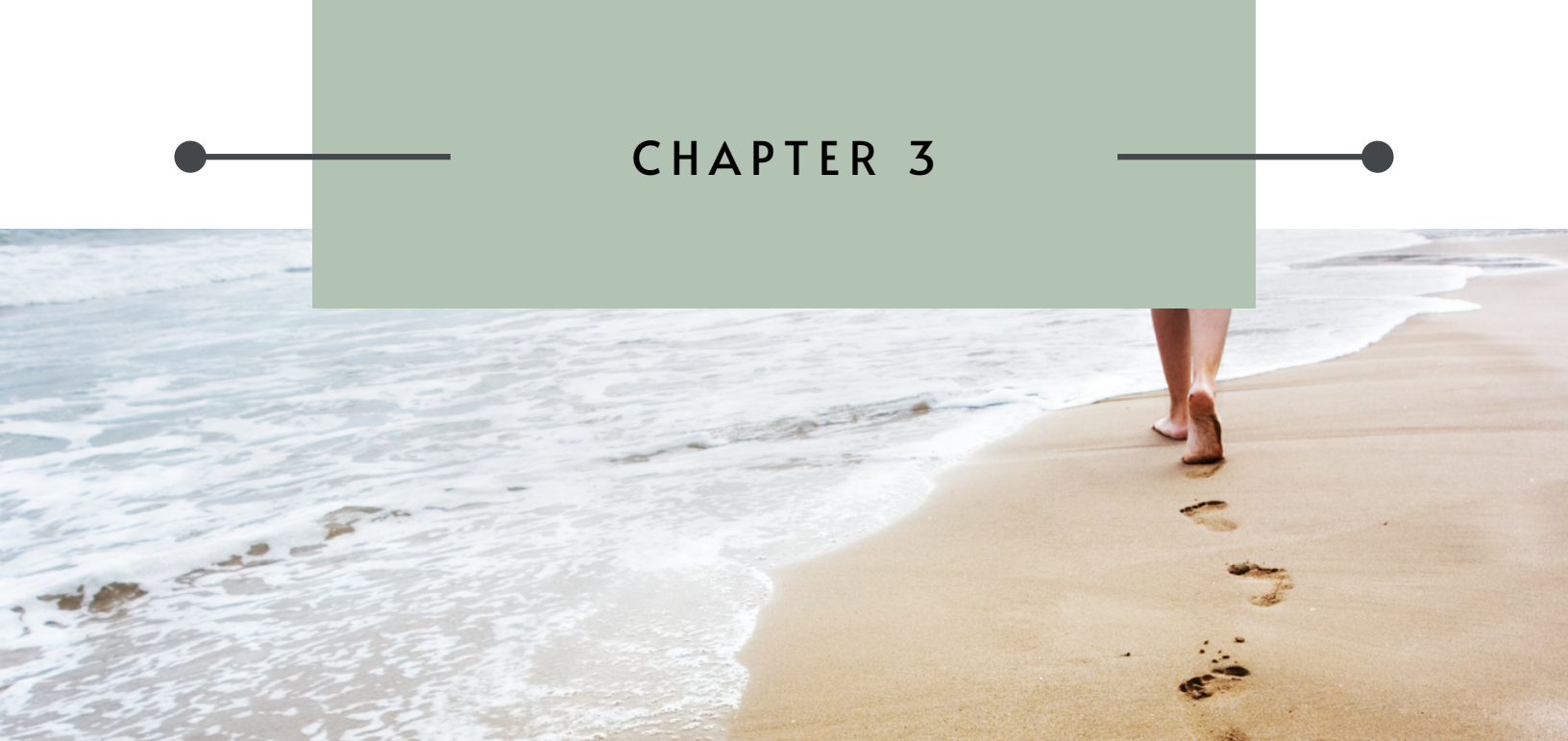
As we turned away from shamanism, to fit into our new, domesticated, tamed, complex modern society, we had to disown and repress huge parts of our psyche and true nature, in order to fit in. In doing this, we created a whole new realm – an enormous sea of repressed material, what Jungians and other psychotherapists might understand as the personal and collective unconscious. This is not an issue traditional shamanism had to deal with. It is though where psychotherapy can help.



SHAMANISM AND PSYCHOTHERAPY NEED TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

Just as shamanism is specifically designed and equipped to deal with problems of soul-loss and Power-loss, psychotherapy (or at least any deep psychotherapy) is specifically designed and equipped to deal with repressed material and the everyday problems we face.

So, shaman can help us with our soul-loss and Power-loss, and disconnection from nature, whilst psychotherapy can help deal with the issues that otherwise can get in the way of our being able to do this. Taken together, they are a powerful combination and one that is perfectly suited for the times we live in now. One that can help us not only regain our animist way of being but find practical ways of integrating this in a healthy way into our modern-day lives too.



CHAPTER 3

FIRST STEPS COURSE

Start your shamanic journey

Learn:

- The history of shamanism and animism. What they are, and what this tells us about where we find ourselves today.
- How to do a shamanic journey (a step-by-step method).
- How to do a Power Animal retrieval journey and find your own Power Animal.
- Other shamanic nature-based practices.
- Why we nearly lost shamanism and lost our way in the process, and how we can recover.
- Therapeutic Shamanism – the differences and similarities between ancient shamanism and modern psychotherapy, and what they might learn from each other.
- The basics of how to do simple shamanic healing for other people (including not just humans, but pets and other animals too).

Session 1

After watching a pre-recorded talk – “What is Shamanism” - given by Paul Francis, the founder of the college, a chance for students to ask the tutors any questions that they have. Then a tutor-led guided shamanic journey to the Lower-World.

Session 2

Learn how to do a shamanic Power Animal retrieval journey. Or, for those who already have a Power Animal, a journey to receive shamanic healing.

Session 3

Exploring what a Power Animal is and how to work with them in more depth.

Session 4

Revisiting your Power Animal and the Lower-World.

Session 5

“Domestication and the Fall” a talk by Paul Francis, on why we nearly lost shamanism and why we need it back. Then a chance to ask tutors questions.

Session 6

Developing what is known as a “hollowing-out” practice – how to make sure that your shamanic journeys are grounded, authentic and Spirit-led.

Session 7

Learn about doing a shamanic healing for someone. Includes looking at interpersonal skills, healthy power-dynamics, and ethical considerations.

Session 8

Shamanic grounding practices. How to do a shamanic "burial" journey, to connect to Mother Earth. Plus, ideas and practical suggestions for exploring shamanism further.



The course is delivered via:

Three live modules These live meetings start at 2pm (UK time). The first is 3.5 to 4 hours long and covers the first two sessions (described below). The second and third live modules are 2 hours long. *N.B. All are recorded for anyone who is not able to attend them live.*

Five pre-recorded modules, delivered via video and accompanying learning materials, are released at intervals as the course progresses.

Your shamanic tribe - a website discussion forum and (an optional) Signal group, where students can ask questions, discuss topics, share experiences and additional resources, and get support, encouragement, and a sense of community.

A bonus video, answering students' questions and offering additional teaching.



Unlimited access

All our courses come with lifelong access to the recordings of the theory recordings and live sessions and other teaching materials.

Self-paced learning

If you can't make the time or dates for the live sessions of our courses, don't worry. You can still sign up, and then do the courses by watching the recordings of the live sessions, all in your own time and at your own pace. Signing up also allows you to join the courses' lively discussion forums, where students can share experiences, ask further questions, debate issues and share ideas and resources.

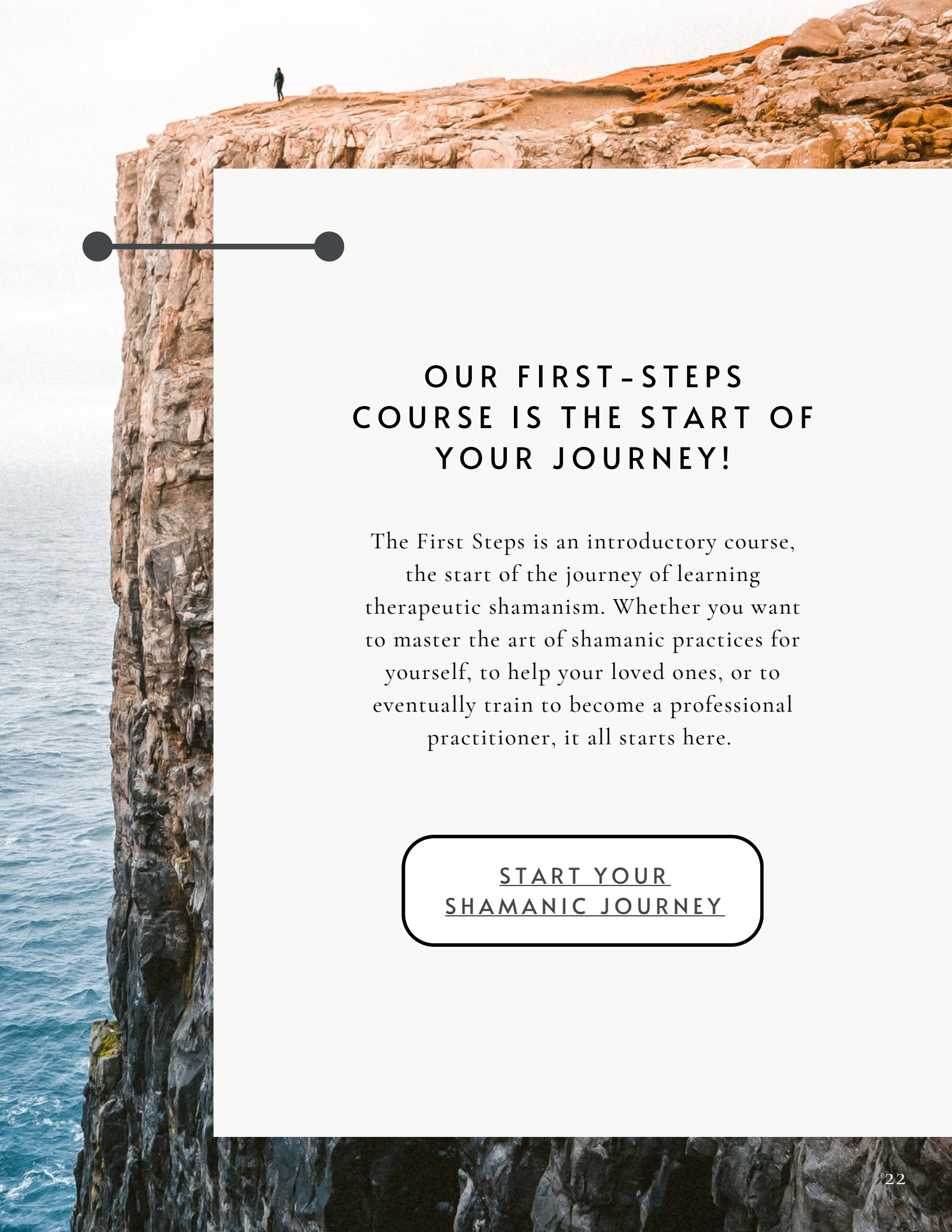


Free life-time revision!

As of now, when we (re)run any course that you have done previously, *you can sign up for the new version for free!*

Join a supportive shamanic community

Our students often say that finding people to walk the shamanic path with can be hard, and so how much they come to deeply value our online community. Signing up for our online courses allows you to join our thriving and growing international community, where you can share your experiences, ask questions and discuss things, and gain support, encouragement, and inspiration.

A person is standing on the edge of a high, rugged cliff. The cliff face is composed of reddish-brown rock. Below the cliff, the ocean is visible with blue waves. A decorative horizontal line with circular endpoints is positioned above the main text area.

OUR FIRST-STEPS COURSE IS THE START OF YOUR JOURNEY!

The First Steps is an introductory course, the start of the journey of learning therapeutic shamanism. Whether you want to master the art of shamanic practices for yourself, to help your loved ones, or to eventually train to become a professional practitioner, it all starts here.

START YOUR
SHAMANIC JOURNEY