



START YOUR SHAMANIC JOURNEY

FREE E-BOOK



THE THREE RAVENS COLLEGE OF THERAPEUTIC SHAMANISM AND ANIMISM

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CONTENT



04

WHAT IS SHAMANISM?

Shamanism is practical application of animist beliefs.

14

FIND YOUR POWER ANIMAL

Shamans invite the helpful spirits to work through them. Your first and foremost guide should be your Power Animal.

17

SHAMANIC JOURNEYING

Shamanism is practical application of these animist beliefs.

22

FIRST STEPS COURSE

Introductory course - learn how to meet your Power animal and do a shamanic journey

CHAPTER I



WHAT IS SHAMANISM?

There is a lot of debate, scholarly and otherwise, about what exactly shamanism is and what it's not. What is usually agreed upon is that shamanism is a branch of animism. To understand what shamanism is, then, we first need to look at animism.

Animism is our oldest spiritual practice. It is far older than the organised religions. It is the original spiritual practice that the overwhelming majority of our ancestors practised, for tens of thousands of years, in every part of the world where humans have settled.

EVERYTHING IS ALIVE AND CONSCIOUS

For animists, everything has a soul – not just humans or even just other animals, but plants, and even the mountains, rivers and the wind too. This makes animism an essentially nature-based spirituality.

Animists experience the world, and everything in it, as being alive, conscious and sacred (albeit conscious in a way that might be quite different to human consciousness). It is not a belief so much as an experience!

**Animism is an
experience, that not just
human, but all things
have a soul - a life force
and consciousness.**

Animism is not a religion

It has no priests, no hierarchies, no sacred texts, no dogma, no sects or factions, and no sacred buildings. Instead, it is based on direct and personal experience.

No human supremacy

In animism, there is no spiritual hierarchy. Humans are not seen as “better” or more evolved than other beings. Instead, animism is a spiritual “round table” where all beings are equal and treated with respect. The central concern of animism is then how to live in a “right-relationship” and be of service, not just to our fellow humans, but to all our brothers and sisters, human and non-human alike.

A spiritual homecoming

Given the number of different and diverse cultures in which animism is found, there is a remarkable consistency in what animists experience and practice. This is because animism is deeply embedded into the human psyche. This makes (re)learning it an easy and familiar experience for many people, a kind of spiritual homecoming.



Shamanism is practical application of these animist beliefs.

The exact dividing line between shamanism and animism is subject to debate. Roughly though, a shaman is an animist who, in addition to experiencing everything in the world as alive and conscious, also has a unique ability to communicate with our other-than-human kin. This can be done in many ways but generally includes being able to enter a specific kind of trance state in which they can communicate with the other beings and receive their teaching and healing. This is what is known as a “shamanic journey”.

It is a highly practical and accessible form of spirituality. You don't have to believe anything or take anything on faith. Instead, it is a path of direct, personal experience.

It can be used in many ways, including healing (of self and for others) and for personal and spiritual development. Practising it brings a deep sense of wholeness and a sense of the interconnectedness of all life. It can instil (or, restore) in one a profound sense of connection with nature, something that has been lost to many of us in our modern-day, urbanised lifestyles



How old is shamanism?

35.000 years old cave paintings

There are cave paintings in Europe, that date back to around 33.000 B.C. which are generally thought to depict shamanic practices. This would arguably make shamanism at least 35.000 years old, much older than any existing organised religion the oldest of which are only around 3000 years-old).

80.000 years old yellow ochre rock ritual object

The problem with going any further back in time is that definitive evidence becomes scant. A piece of yellow ochre rock that had carvings on it had been found in the Blombos caves in South Africa. The proposal was that this object was probably a shamanic ritual object. Carbon dating put this carving back to around 75,000 B.C..



100.000 years old ochre-processing area

In 2008, in the same cave, the remains of an ochre-processing area were found. Ochre is widely used in shamanic societies for body painting. In animist cultures, this is rarely done purely for ornamentation and decoration but as part of sacred shamanic practices. This paint factory has been carbon-dated at around 100,000 years old.

189.000 years of homo sapiens existence

Interesting as these archaeological findings are - if you ask indigenous people how old shamanism is, they would generally say that we have been practising shamanism for as long as we have been human!

How can shamanism help?

Healing Power-loss and Soul-loss

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

SYMPTOMS OF POWER-LOSS AND SOUL-LOSS

To name a few:

- Feeling numb or flat, as if a spark is missing and you are just “going through the motions”.
- Feeling of apathetic and indifferent.
- A sense of being disconnected from life and the things around you, as if you are living in a dream.
- Depression, whether mild or severe.
- Feeling lost, and lacking in purpose and direction.
- Procrastination, and finding it hard to maintain focus or effort.
- Lacking in self-confidence and self-belief.
- Having a strong inner-critic who sabotages you.
- Phobias and anxieties.
- Lost memories (where have the memories gone, and why did they go?).
- Self-medicating to cope with day-to-day life.
- A sense of never having quite recovered from a past event.
- Repeating unhealthy patterns – such as returning to people, situations or behaviours that are not good for you.
- Feeling unable to move on from past issues or events, despite efforts to do so.
- Finding it hard to look to the future with much enthusiasm and optimism.
- Feelings of grief, fear, anger or sadness etc., that you can't shake off.



Soul-loss

Shamans understand that parts of our soul can leave our bodies. If, however, those parts do not return, the result is a sense of emptiness and a feeling that something is missing.

Sometimes, the lost part is stuck back in the time period and place of the trauma. Other times, the soul part drifts further, and literally goes off into realms beyond this one. Sometimes parts flee to safe places in these other realms. And sometimes they gravitate to places of hopelessness and despair. What they need, and what the person they belong to needs, is to come back. This is where soul retrieval comes in.



SOUL RETRIEVAL - GETTING THE LOST SOUL PART BACK

In a soul retrieval, the skilled shamanic practitioner leaves their own body and enters into shamanic reality. This is usually (but not always) done to the accompaniment of a shamanic drum or rattle. Working with the help of their power animal(s) and other guides, the practitioner finds the soul part of the person they are journeying for, and attempts to persuade it to return. If it agrees to return, the part is then gathered up, brought back to this reality, and then literally blown back into the person's body.



Power-loss

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.

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, 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 soul retrieval alone. Instead, when there is Power-loss, we need to address its root cause – the disconnection from the other-than-human (and specifically, from our fellow animals, plants, and even the land itself).

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:

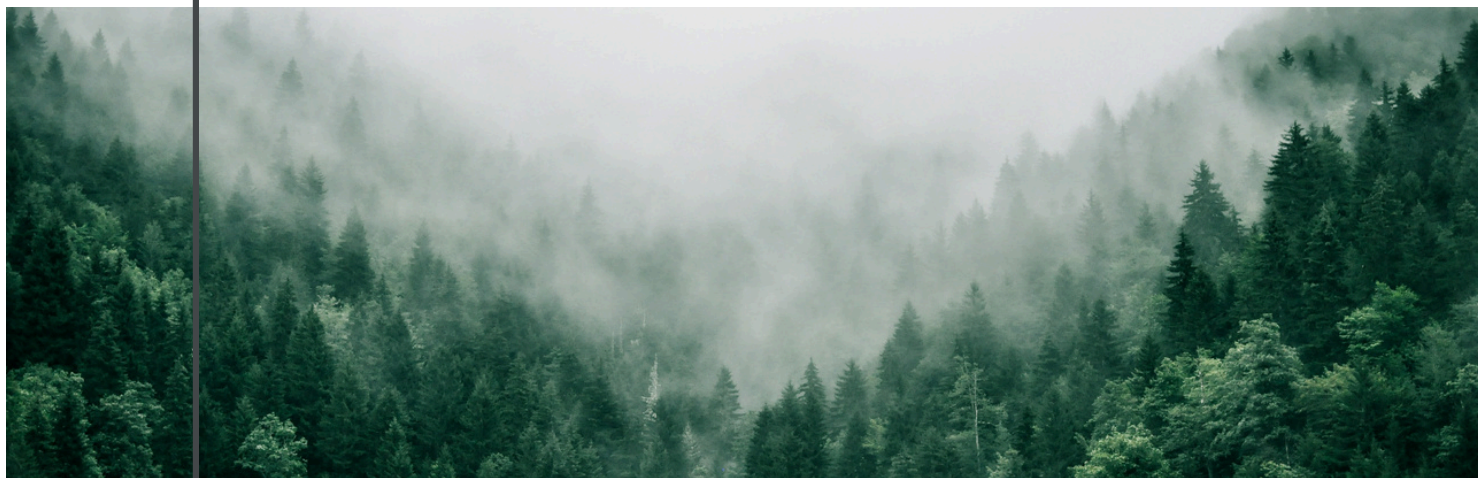
- SPENDING TIME IN NATURE
- SHAMANIC JOURNEYING
- Connecting back to the shamanic realms, underneath the layers of separation and distortions laid over it by modern ‘civilisation’.
- POWER ANIMAL RETRIEVAL
- Bonding with Power Animal (our most important connection to the more-than-human!).
- COMMUNICATING WITH NATURE

Just spending time in nature is good for us, but shamanism goes further. Rather than just being in nature, shamans communicate with nature. Indeed, doing that this was (and is) very much one of the roles of the shaman – to connect with nature and be its advocate and voice, and be the intermediary between humans and the rest of nature. Shamanism has practical ways of doing this, ways that work, and in learning shamanism, you can learn to do this too!

Healing Power-loss and Soul-loss is not an event, it’s a process! It’s about how you live your life day in, day in and day out, for the rest of your life! It is about building relationship with the more-than human and having a respectful relationship with them, and finding your healthy place in the web of life.

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

● Shamanism can show you how.



THERAPEUTIC SHAMANISM

A branch of core shamanism

As he studied shamanic cultures, Harner realised that underneath the cultural trappings of a particular tribe's shamanic practice, there is a series of core beliefs and practices that are essentially common to all shamanic cultures. These form the basis of what Harner 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, humans lived as 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 as we witness the recent resurgence and growth of interest in shamanism, shamanism is re-emerging into a very different world from the one it thrived in before.



Shamanism needs to become relevant and applicable to the times that we live in now. As these are changed times. Our fall from shamanism has changed us profoundly.

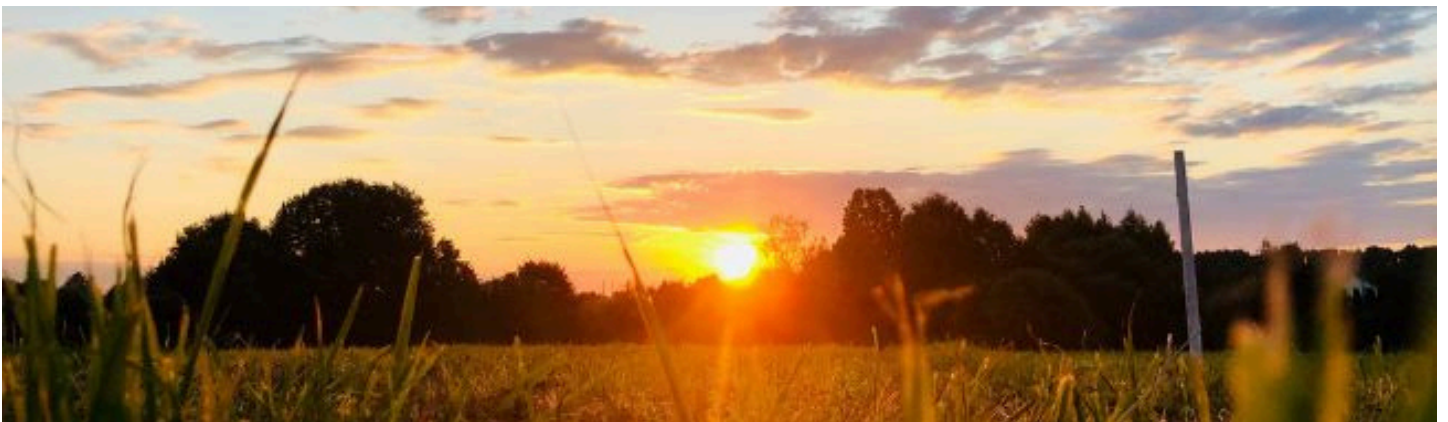
In losing shamanism and animism, we lost our way. We need it back. Indeed, our very survival, and those of our fellow species, may well depend on it. However, in bringing it back, we need to understand that we now live in different times, face different challenges, and so need to find new ways to apply it. Which is why we teach *Therapeutic Shamanism*.

As we turned away from shamanism, in order 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.



CHAPTER 2



MEET YOUR POWER ANIMAL

These days, the terms ‘Power Animal’, ‘Spirit Animals’ and ‘Animal Helpers’ are often used interchangeably by modern shamanic practitioners and in new-age circles.

Consequently, they are used to cover a whole host of different relationships with animals that indigenous tribes would have had separate and specific words for. So I want to be clear about what these terms mean in Therapeutic Shamanism.



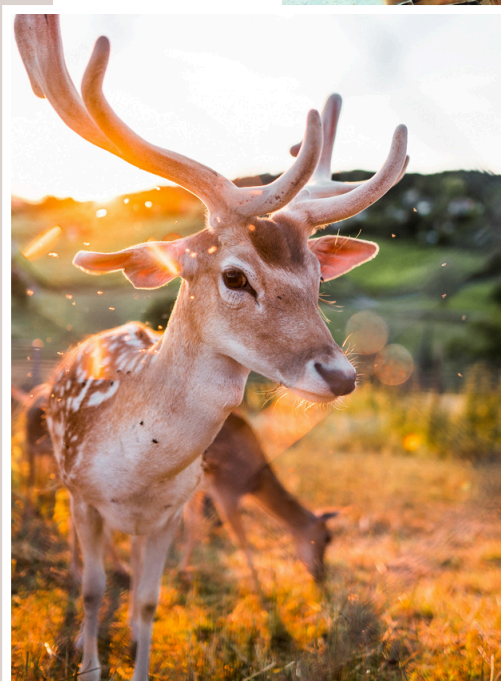
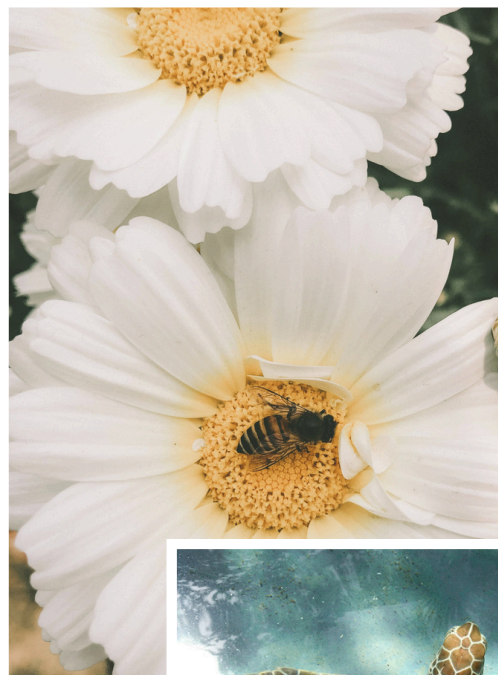
Power Animal is Mother Earth trying to tell you that she loves you in a form that she thinks you will understand.

Animal Totems

Should you decide to practice shamanism, over the course of journeying you will meet many different animals. Some of them may only appear for one journey, and you may never work with them again. Others you will see intermittently. Yet others may become regular companions, and be with you for periods of weeks, months or even years. Indeed, some may become lifelong companions. 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.

Power Animal

In Therapeutic Shamanism, a Power Animal is something different altogether. Think of the difference between friends on the one hand, and a lifelong, committed, deep soul bond on the other. Similarly, animal helpers are like friends. Some of them are fleeting acquaintances, others are friendships that will last months or years, and some may even last a lifetime. As such, they may become very dear to you, and you may get to know them and understand them very well, and even love them deeply. Your relationship with the Power Animal, however, should you choose to enter into it, is of a whole different level of depth, intensity, loyalty, and love.

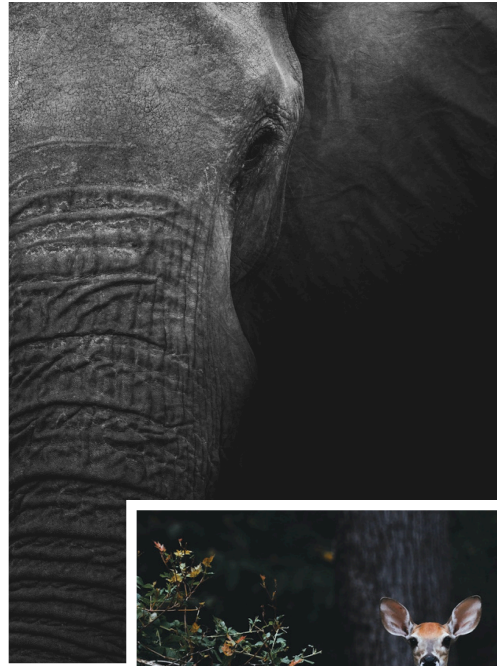


YOUR POWER ANIMAL IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT GUIDE!

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.

Your job is simply to ask spirit animals and your Power animal for healing and then to watch, remember, do as instructed, and learn. If you do this then you will realise just how wise and knowledgeable your Power Animal truly is, and that you can trust them utterly.



MEET YOUR POWER ANIMAL

So, working with Power Animal is a crucial part of developing a shamanic practice. You find and retrieve your Power Animal by doing a shamanic journey. Learning shamanic journeying and workings with spirit animals is not that hard. You don't need any special talents or powers (just an open mind). But it requires an understanding of some fundamental concepts and the process.

CHAPTER 3



SHAMANIC JOURNEYING

Shamanism tells us that there is another, deeper reality behind this day-to-day, physical one. The physical, explicate, reality that we inhabit is made from information that exists in the deeper, implicate reality.

This ability to be aware of both levels of reality is central to shamanic practice. In fact, shamanism is sometimes described as having 'one foot in this world and one in the other'. Or, sometimes, as 'walking between the worlds'.



The physical, explicate, reality that we inhabit is made from information that exists in the deeper, implicate reality.

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 THREE SHAMANIC WORLDS

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.

They are organised spatially

When journeying we usually experience the realms as being organized 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'

The three realms 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.



The Upper-World

is 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'.



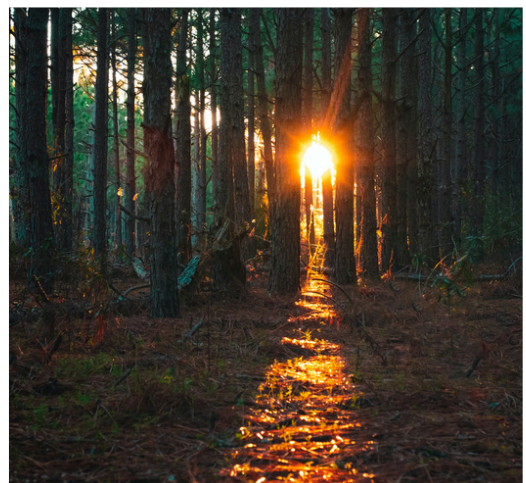
The Middle-World

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

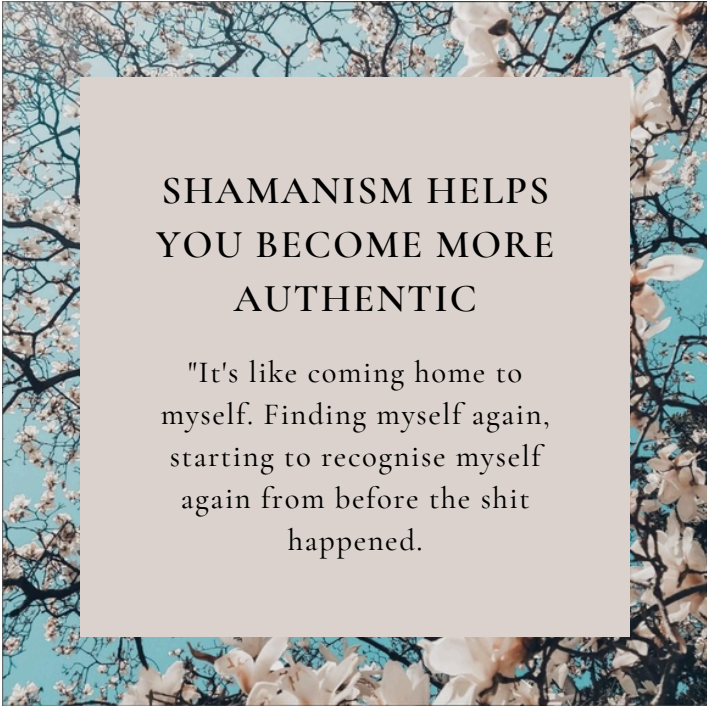


The Lower-World

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

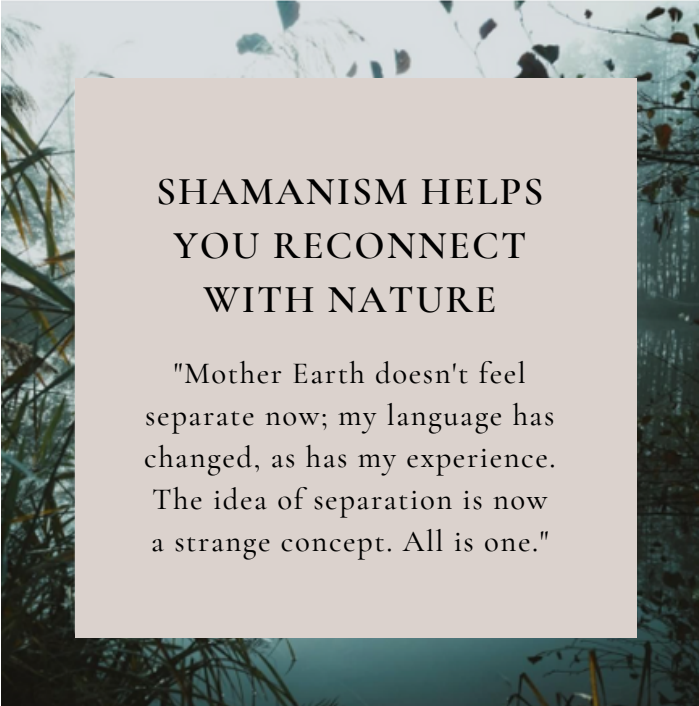


WHY OUR STUDENTS LOVE SHAMANIC JOURNEYING AND THERAPEUTIC SHAMANISM?



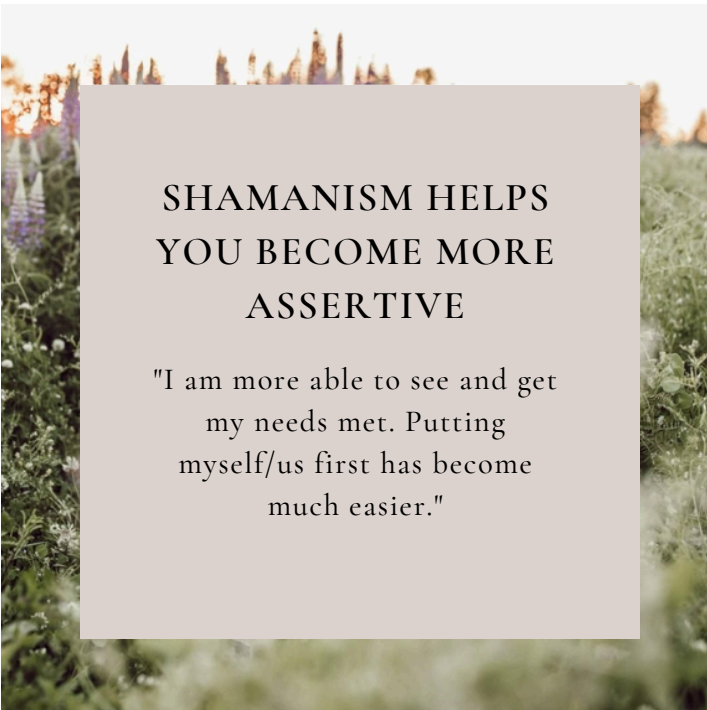
SHAMANISM HELPS YOU BECOME MORE AUTHENTIC

"It's like coming home to myself. Finding myself again, starting to recognise myself again from before the shit happened."



SHAMANISM HELPS YOU RECONNECT WITH NATURE

"Mother Earth doesn't feel separate now; my language has changed, as has my experience. The idea of separation is now a strange concept. All is one."



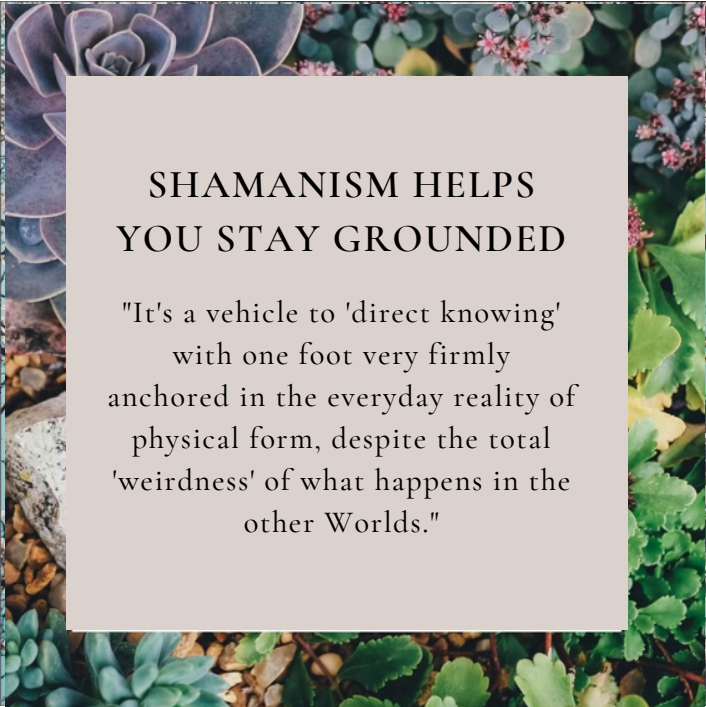
SHAMANISM HELPS YOU BECOME MORE ASSERTIVE

"I am more able to see and get my needs met. Putting myself/us first has become much easier."



SHAMANISM OPENS YOU UP TO A WIDER ECO-REALITY

"It's a form of spirituality that has opened me up to the world."



SHAMANISM HELPS YOU STAY GROUNDED

"It's a vehicle to 'direct knowing'
with one foot very firmly
anchored in the everyday reality of
physical form, despite the total
'weirdness' of what happens in the
other Worlds."



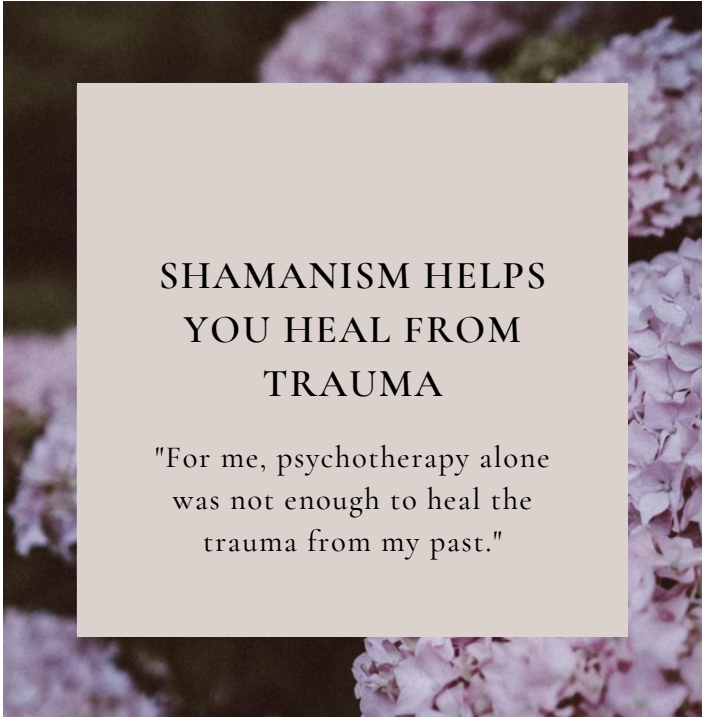
SHAMANISM HELPS YOU BECOME A BETTER HUMAN

"It helps you track and stalk
your own belief system, how you
see yourself and yourself with
others and to interrogate that
with ruthless self-compassion
and compassion for others."



SHAMANISM HELPS YOU TRUST AGAIN

"Shamanism has renewed my
faith in humanity."

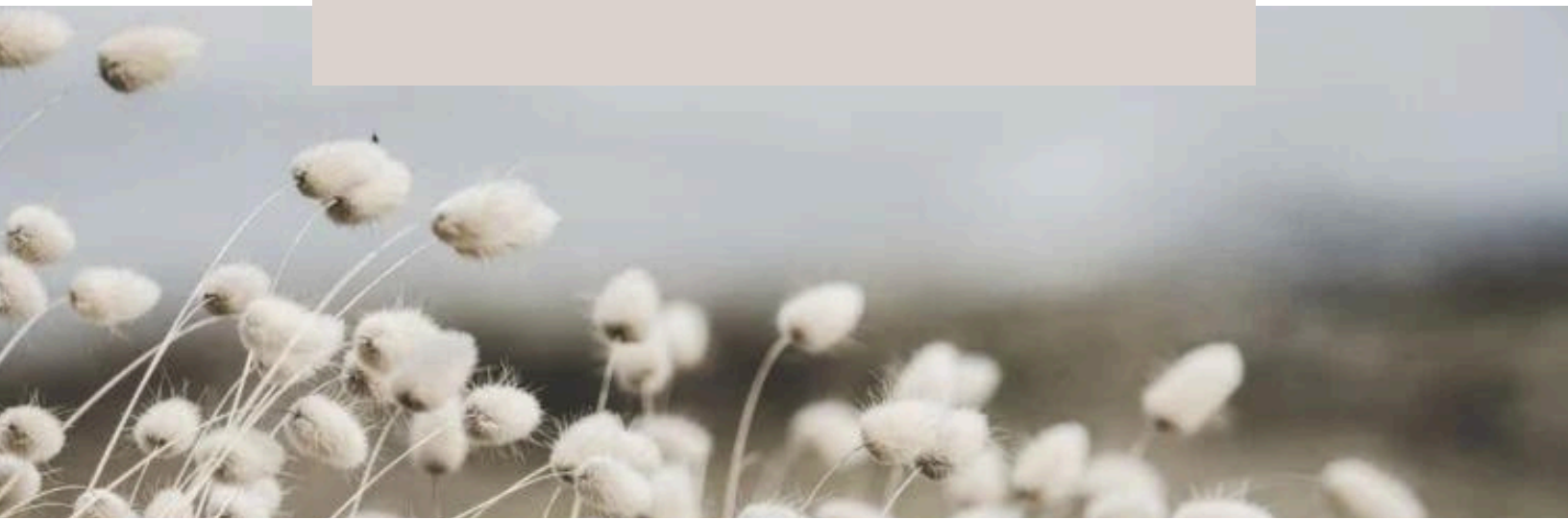


SHAMANISM HELPS YOU HEAL FROM TRAUMA

"For me, psychotherapy alone
was not enough to heal the
trauma from my past."

START YOUR SHAMANIC JOURNEY

CHAPTER 4



FIRST STEPS COURSE

Start your shamanic journey & meet your Power Animal

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.



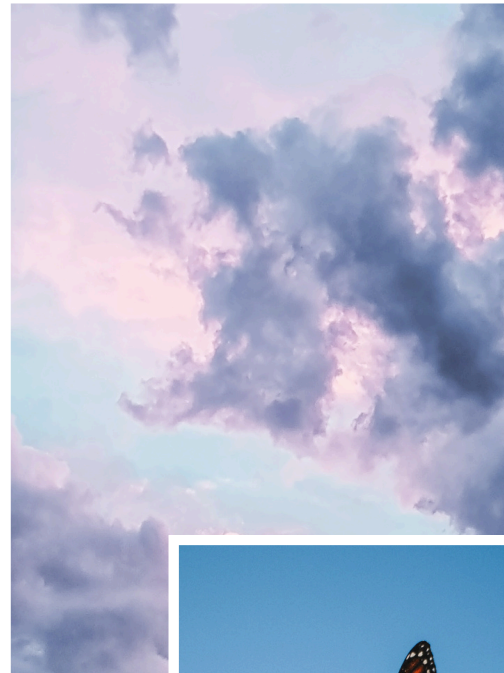
The course is delivered via:

Three live modules on September 30th, October 14th, and October 28th. 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. All are recorded, for anyone who is not able to attend them live.

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

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.

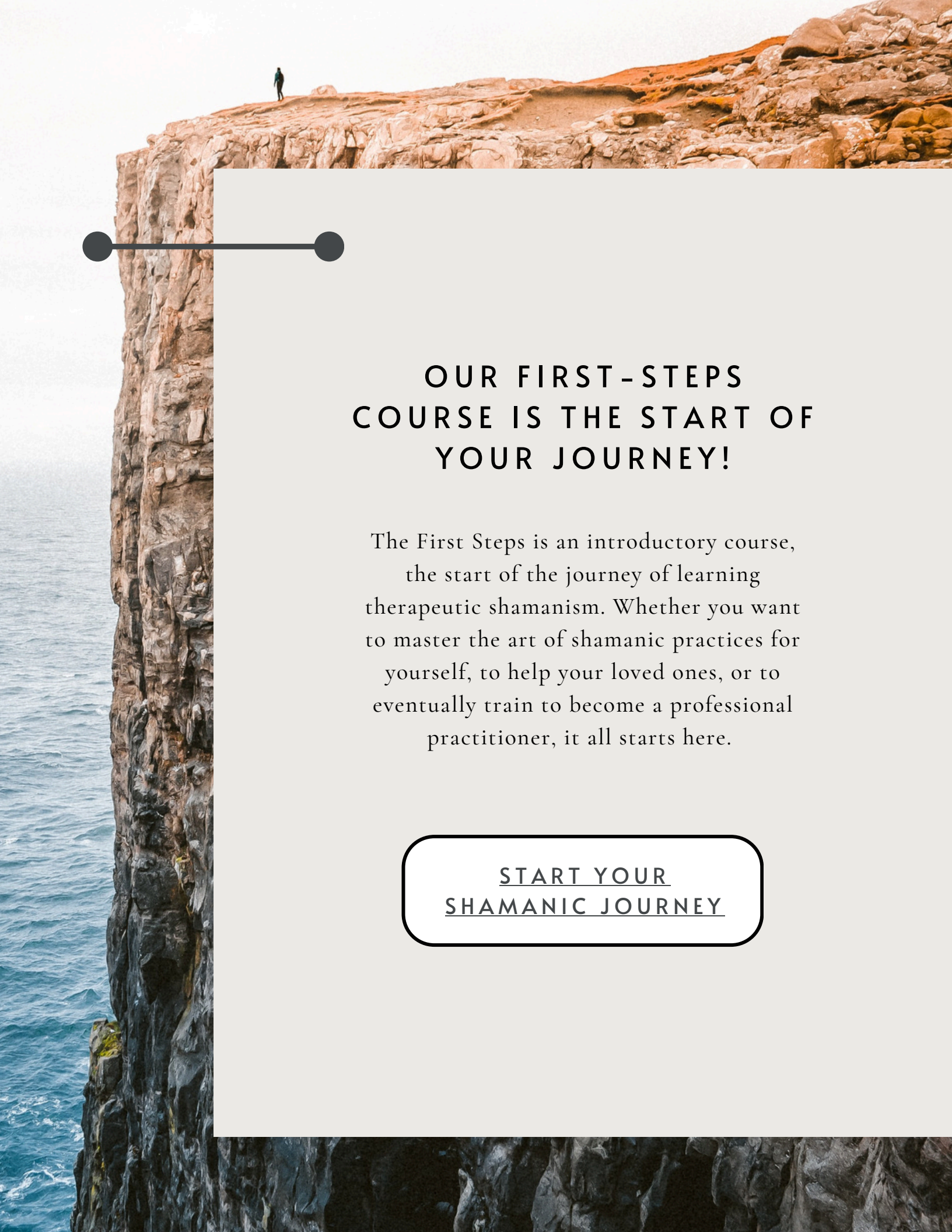
Free life-time revision!

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, reddish-brown rock cliff. The cliff face is steep and textured. Below the cliff, the ocean is visible with blue waves. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. A decorative horizontal line with two black 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