

Six Precepts of Earth-based Rites of Passage

The concept of precepts is common to all major spiritual traditions. Many who have taken on *Earth-based Rites of Passage* as a regular practice consider it to be a unique brand of spirituality; a celebration of the soul and a path toward connecting with spirit. Ultimately, it is a life path; a reclaiming of the ancient way of living upon the earth.

Suzuki Roshi, founder of the San Francisco Zen Center writes of precepts,

“When we say “precepts,” we usually mean some rules, but that is just a superficial understanding of precepts. Precepts are actually the expression of our true nature. The way we express our true nature is always according to the place or situation in which you live... to observe our precepts is just to be yourself.”

What is our true nature? The answer to this question is found out on the land, by sitting quietly and opening to the mirror the natural world offers each and every one of us. Society imposes the rules. In contrast, these precepts offer the path toward forgetting the rules. And, in supporting a transformative experience these precepts enable us to claim our birthright, to become the brightest, fullest self we can possibly become.

These precepts are another way of presenting the guiding principles of rites of passage practices common to the growing number of schools and organizations teaching the tradition. They are not intended to be a substitute for a guide or an organized program. They will serve well with any approach to contemporary Earth-based Rites of Passage. May these precepts support a holistic expression of the soul and a deep connection to the natural world.

1) Declare Your Intention

Why do you go to the land? What are you honoring or marking in your ceremony? Declare a succinct powerful intention, which will sustain you through the suffering. What does the land need to know about you? Ask what rituals will support your intention.

2) Carry What You Need

This means leaving behind what you won't need. Is it necessary or a distraction? If you become lost, do you have what you need to survive the night? Do you have all the items on the checklist? If not, ask your guide. Remember the ones you will return home to, and call in your allies. Carry a sufficient supply of water and drink it!

3) Slow Down

Do not rush. Be mindful of every step and conserve energy. Set your pace to “wilderness time.” Walk gently upon the land and the critters will be your friends. Ask yourself, *what am I missing here?* Do not panic, it never helps anything. Stop, be still, and pay attention.

4) Open To The Land

What does the land mirror back to you about yourself? Pay attention to every detail. Question your assumptions about what is happening around you. Empty out so something new can come in. What ceremony is the land calling forth? Place yourself within the four directions, and note landmarks.

5) Honor the Circle

Remember the ancestors who have sat in council and walked the land before you. Also honor the present-day circle of which you are a part. You carry that circle with you. If you get hurt, the circle suffers too. Offer prayers for the well being of each person in your circle. Honor the guidelines of council.* Respect the space of others out on the land. Know your guide’s emergency plan. And, return on time!

6) Leave No Trace

Leave your power spot just as you found it. Erase your tracks and all signs of your presence. Pack out all trash. *What is your role in healing the land?* When you find a treasure, enjoy it and leave it be. If you believe it is meant to go home with you, ask if it will have meaning to you in six months.

- *1) Speak from the heart
- 2) Be Spontaneous
- 3) Be of lean expression
- 4) Listen generously