

The Cycle of Renewal
Soul Matters Theme: Repair
Pagan Holiday: Samhain
November 10, 2024

Introduction

- Earlier this week, I awoke into a version of the world which I had hoped to avoid having to live through
 - my first thoughts were sorrow, feelings of loss, anger
 - sense that my values are not shared by a majority
 - kindness, generosity, community spirit
 - many are struggling to find sense of comfort/ sign of hope
- Samhain season
 - Last month: Samhain as time for ancestor veneration
 - This month: Samhain as the start of the new year
 - Looking back, looking forward
 - Celtic day begins at sunset. Year begins at summer's end
 - Significance of this time, this era in light of election
 - Beginning of a dark time; we need to look forward
 - Darkest days give way in the cycle of renewal
- First steps forward: Repair
 - moral and ethical imperative to engage in acts of repair
 - personal: healing ourselves
 - communal: relationships, communities, the environment

Bridging Samhain and Repair

- Personal repair: this feels exactly like grief
 - Take time to grieve
 - Don't make major changes right away
 - Not the time to immediately take action
 - Wait a while before making big decisions, e.g. moving
 - Be kind to yourself / take care of yourself
 - eat when you need to
 - drink lots of water
 - rest, stretch, move, breathe
 - try to get enough sleep

- exercise
 - walks outside - solvitur ambulando
- journal
- meditate
- avoid old bad habits (drinking, smoking)
- find your poise, your calm, your sense of place and purpose
- give yourself positive reminders of who you are and what you went through to get there
- recoup your energy; you'll need it
- use technology wisely
 - don't just doom scroll
 - be conscious about your news intake
 - set time limits and sources
 - take a conscious break from social media
 - seek community
 - more curated online experience - Mastodon etc
- Talk to others
 - Let friends and family know how you're feeling and that you need to talk
 - Reach out to people you haven't heard from in a while
 - Connect with the people who are always there for others
 - Keep working on community
- Be patient with yourself and others
 - grief takes time
 - some days will be better than others
- Consider professional support
- Use Samhain as a moment to reflect on your life and the connections you share with others
- Reaching out to Ancestors for help with repair
 - Engage with the past to inform our present actions
 - ancestors lived through some hard times
 - honoring those who came before can guide our actions toward repairing current injustices
 - Become a student of history
 - take inspiration

- deepen your understanding of how to struggle and thrive
- We are part of a repeating cycle
- Rituals to honor ancestors while committing to repair
 - lighting candles
 - sharing stories
 - looking at photos
 - really, openly talk to them
 - deep listening
 - ancestors provide practice for applying repair to the living

Stepping aside: What is repair?

- Repair of broken mower
 - Removed oil and gas, turned upside down, bent parts back into shape, added a steel "bandaid"
 - It's not brand new, but:
 - I know better now how the pieces fit together
 - I could fix it faster next time
 - Are there relationships that can be similarly repaired?
 - Are there others which may be beyond repair?
- Japanese art of kintsugi - 'filling the gaps with gold'
 - more rare, beautiful and storied than the original
 - Instead of hiding the damage, the cracks are highlighted with precious metals, turning the breakage into part of the object's history and beauty.
 - there is beauty in brokenness. Traumatic experiences may leave marks on our lives, but with care, those marks can be integrated and honored as part of who we are, rather than something to be hidden or erased.
 - Does this work for our relationships?
 - Gold is stronger than ceramic
- The Repair Shop as an analogy
 - some people want things to look brand new
 - cost would be higher than buying a brand new item
 - others want them to work again, but with all the cracks and dents
 - the "distress" reveals the life lived
- Applications to relationships
 - nothing is ever restored to brand new
 - Would we ever really want that?

- words spoken cannot be taken back
- Can we make something stronger out of admitting the damages?
- reflect on personal relationships
 - ask: can what has been broken be mended?
 - finding out what really matters to people
 - (Abraham) Maslow's hierarchy of needs
 - can't care about spiritual issues when there's not enough money to buy food or shelter
 - Is it this? Or is it something uglier?
 - letting go of some connections for personal health
 - we cannot martyr ourselves
 - some people's views are too far gone
 - consider who does/does not need to be in your community

Back to Actions

- Trust yourself.
 - Listen to your gut.
 - Take a walk. Get outside. Read a book.
- Don't stop aspiring to be the person you want to be
- Find others you trust
 - Get together with people
 - Don't isolate
- Notice that this situation is not *all* of your reality
 - surround yourself with beautiful music or nature
 - joy in the face of hard times is not a luxury, it is a necessity
- Take delight in creation
 - cook a meal, organize a drama, sew a quilt, knit a hat, make a sign, play music
- Commit to sharing with others what's helping you
 - Writing (creative pursuits/making art)
 - multiple projects
 - dark fiction allows some degree of catharsis
 - this sermon
 - articles about healing, repairing, moving on
 - Getting outside in nature

- movement
 - Keeping busy/planning for spring
 - lawnmowers, winterizing, sorting parts
 - Cooking, baking
 - kneading bread is magical
- Relationship / Community Repair
 - Build new relationships, restore old ones
 - online and face-to-face
 - Some practices that can help with interpersonal repair include:
 - Listen to others' experiences and perspectives
 - Resist making assumptions about others
 - Make space for everyone to speak
 - Expect and accept non-closure
 - Some attitudes that can help with repair include:
 - Searching your soul to see where you may have missed the mark
 - Offering forgiveness to those who have wronged you
 - Taking actions to make your community more just, loving, and peaceful
 - Finding the sacred in what is broken
 - Propose projects that embody the spirit of repair
 - service opportunities, discussions on restorative justice, environmental stewardship efforts

Conclusion

- When darkness descends, we may think our hopes have died
 - but hope never stays dead
 - it rises anew each morning, regardless of the fate it suffered the previous day
 - each day you must choose to find hope
 - in choosing to find it you are granted its power, its protection, its everlasting endurance
- No one knows what the future holds
 - uncertainty can hold terror or hope
 - hope always exists
 - you have to choose to find it
 - you have to choose to pay attention to it

- it's human to be distracted by frightful things which seek to steal your attention, your courage, and your power away from you
 - you have a choice
 - the power to choose is the power to overcome all things

Final Thoughts

- Samhain season is *always* an opportunity for healing and renewal
 - *especially* this year
 - personally and collectively
- If my words do not soothe your heart or calm your mind that's okay
 - I can't reach out and pull you out of despair all on my own
 - all I hope to do is shine a light to help you find your way
 - On dark days it's easy to feel like sometimes there's nothing that we can do at all and that there's no point in trying, but that simply isn't true
 - In the darkest of days the eternal stars shine brightest
 - And the cycle continues
 - You are not alone. You are loved!