

The Medicine Bag

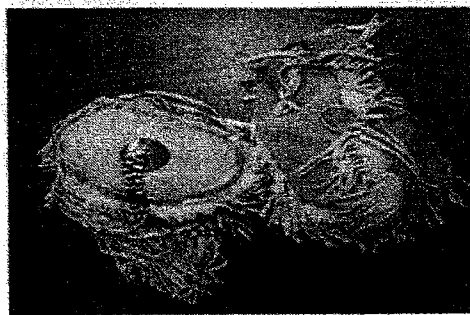
Do you remember the days of kindergarten and show and tell, when you brought your worlds to school inside a brown paper grocery bag? At six years old, you were allowed to collect your identity and encouraged to feel the pride of your Self. Reaching in to pull out your treasures became a sacred ceremony.

As children, you reached in your brown paper bag for the glory of your Self, held high. It was the mystery only you understood. The pulse of the bag opening connected to the pulse of your heart. Your young heart beat strong with the wondrous excitement of the prized Self. From this understanding and becoming of Self, you shared your essence with others.

As you grew older, show and tell ended. The brown bags were no longer allowed at school. You may even have been told not to colour outside the lines, to keep the mud outside, and to wipe off that kool-aid smile. To grow up, become an adult, to leave your toys at home, in essence to keep your Self at home.

The celebration of becoming was denied. Many of us lost our wonder and pride in the process. The balance was disturbed.

Native Americans have long understood bag-wisdom. The medicine bag is a tradition of collecting, honouring, and engaging your identities.



Years ago, the essential to carry

your inner strength, As Native American people traveled long distances.

The power of one's medicine bag is perhaps even more meaningful today

medicine bag was ones Mash-ka-wisen

than it was many years ago.

There are many kinds of medicine bags for many different purposes. The bag I now speak of is your personal bag. To keep its power, it needs to be kept personalized by reserving its contents only for yourself and the privileged disclosure of intimate relationships. In doing this, you give yourself permission to fully know yourself.

The medicine bag helps us discover and collect our identity. We must go further, and come to know our strengths, weaknesses, character defects, our light side and our dark side.

The four principles you need to follow to identify the items for your personal medicine bag are to 1) truly know yourself, 2) discipline yourself, 3) be yourself, and 4) give of yourself. You will need to journey through your shadows and your lighted places to find you and who you really are.

Take what you've found out about who you are, and what you now know. Follow those directives. If you found that you like fried onions, fry them. If you found you love music, dance. If you found you need to be quiet, be alone for awhile. If you found you love children, spend time with them. If you found that you do not like your job, find a new one. Whatever you found - be it! If it takes discipline, then discipline yourself. If it is easy then relax and enjoy it. But do it. Be it. Become it.

You are responsible to the Universe to be who you are meant to be. If you are scared because it is a new way to be, do it anyway. If you say "I can't" tap your Mash-ka-wisen (inner strength) and say "I can". If you shake and shudder at the thought of being who you really are, then shake and shudder. You will not break. Take the risk and flap your own wings. Be who you are.

Be yourself, express yourself, and enjoy the experience. That's what we're here for and that's all there is. Go for it all, make a total commitment to becoming.

Spend some time with yourself.

Get acquainted with yourself.

No distractions.

No excuses.

You may find that you are in good company when you are alone. One of the greatest tragedies in life is to go through lifetime, in the same body, with the same Self, and never get to know yourself. Take time to find your values and to know who you are. Take time to find your strengths and your weaknesses.

Take some time now and find what you value. Make a list of ten things you value most in your life. Your God, spouse, children, home, job, car, nature, or whatever. Then one by one, give them up, sacrifice one for the rest. Continue until you are left with only one item. You will find that the choices get more and more difficult the further you go. You are measuring and prioritizing your value system. Although this may be difficult even painful, it is valuable for us to have a well thought out value system.

Once you get to know yourself, then you need to discipline yourself in order to get a grip on your inner controls. When you discipline yourself you learn to become your own responsible authority. You learn to become responsive, rather than reactive. Instead of knee-jerk, thoughtless behaviour, you use the time to become. And you become what you think about. You learn to take care of yourself through discipline.

I made my own list and discovered my inadequacies and my weaknesses. One by one, I wrote them on one side of a poker chip. On the other side of the poker chip, I wrote the remedy. On one side I wrote arrogance, on the other side, humility. One side indicated defiance, the other side compliance. I carried one of these chips in my pocket at all times. Whenever I reached in, I touched the chip and was reminded to discipline myself. Both my weakness and the antidote was at my fingertips. Each

time I touched the chip, I had a decision to make, a choice to engage. Each month I would rotate a different poker chip until I greatly reduced my weaknesses. I do not consistently carry a poker chip in my pocket these days unless I recognize that the weakness is returning. Try it. It works, if you work it.

Once you have become yourself, you have something to give... yourself.

The Native way is "WE". This is a giving system. The women are in the center, or the hub of the wheel, because they create and nurture new life. The men are on the periphery, supporting the center. All work together for the common "WE". It is an effort of giving. On your journey to becoming, find what you have to give, then offer it freely. What are your strengths? The longer the list is, the greater is your obligation to the Sacred Hoop. Recognize what you give is for the good of all.

What is your talent? Share it with others.

What is your strength? Give it to others.

What is your passion? Reveal it to others.

What is your understanding? Teach it to others.

Once a day, be deliberate in the act of giving. Choose how and what you will give. Discipline yourself to do this each day, and soon you will be living a giving life. Give only for the sake of giving. In solitude, give. In the presence of others, give. You take much from this world. Like a brave, you must place tobacco down and give the world something back.

When you are feeling depressed, lonely, disconnected, beaten up by life, you will find your energy source and essence within your medicine bag. The medicine bag will help you ground yourself to your spiritual center. Remember the spiritual center of the universe is within every individual not on some mountain peak somewhere. Man belongs to the Earth, Earth does not belong to man. Love the land as the newborn child loves his mother's heartbeat.

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