



## DRUMMING DURING PREGNANCY & LABOUR

### The Shamanic Drum

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Drumming is an ancient shamanic technique used cross-culturally for **healing, harmonising** and **journeying within**. The drum is as old as human kind and has been used in all cultures. It is a feminine symbol – a round container that vibrates life. In the ancient cultures of the Mediterranean and Middle East, the predominant players of the drum were women. They used the drum for religious functions, rites of passage, communal bonding and healing. The drum has been traced back to the **Goddess traditions** of these ancient cultures. There are many images from temples, wall paintings, vases and reliefs depicting women playing the frame drum.

In her book, *When the Drummers were Women*, Layne Redmond explains:

*“Priestesses of the Goddess were skilled technicians in its (the frame drum) uses. They knew which rhythms quickened the life in freshly planted seeds; which facilitated childbirth; and which induced the ecstatic trance of spiritual transcendence. Guided by drumbeats, these sacred drummers could alter their consciousness at will, travelling through the three worlds of the Goddess: the heavens, the earth and the underworld”*

### Drumming During Pregnancy & Birth

Drumming for women during pregnancy and labour is a skill and tool to be **reclaimed**, this is something women have been doing for much, much longer than they haven't.

During pregnancy, shamanic drum journeying is a wonderful technique that can be used to help the mother connect with her baby inside her, as well as connect with her womb, vagina and vulva. So often women feel disconnected from their babies and their own bodies and this process helps work toward healing or dealing with whatever it is that blocks that connection. Shamanic drum journeying is like a **self guided meditation into the unseen realms**, or into the body, to the beat of the drum, for the purpose of seeking information and **spiritual guidance** that will contribute to and help situations in our ordinary here and now conscious reality.

*“Drum Journeying during my pregnancy allowed me to go **deeply within**, into my womb to journey with and meet my baby. I could see baby up close and personal. This was amazing! I felt as though I touched my baby before the birth, our souls connected on a deeper level - it was our private journey and this connection again deepened our relationship.*

*The ability to travel to the womb was very sacred, enlightening. I was able to visualise my baby after each drumming journey with more clarity - this **enhanced my communication** with the baby. I drew a picture moments after the journey and hung the completed artwork up on the wall for the remainder of the pregnancy. Just having this there in my proximity allowed me to download the sacred moment into my subconscious every time I walked past.”*

Sophia

When used in labour drumming can help transport a woman into the **altered state of consciousness** that best facilitates labour and birth. Drumming in the birth room helps **create a sacred space**, keeps the energy focussed, enables the mother to move her attention inward and reduces disturbance to her. Using the drum during labour helps to **reduce the intensity of contractions** - the vibration dissipates the pain and the sound offers the woman a **focal point** that enables her to access an altered state of consciousness.

*“One of my support women played a large frame drum over my sacrum through each contraction, which was amazing. The drum gave me a point of focus that allowed me to **instinctively go within** and be with the pain of the contraction. I was able to focus and relax and I noticed that as the contraction started with the drumming, the pain of the contraction would melt away as I felt the drum beat vibrate through my sacrum. The tension seemed to lift and this allowed me to experience many **painless contractions**. As I focused on the feeling of the vibration in my sacrum it took my focus off the pain and I experienced the contraction with the rhythm of drum beat guiding me through. I felt relaxed through labour. Babe and I worked as a team and I was tuned in with her and my needs, I was aware of what I was thinking and feeling in a very “observer” kind of way.”*

Pip

**Vibration** is known to have an **analgesic effect**, and is used in the treatment of chronic pain. Studies suggest that vibration might interfere with the transmission of pain signals from various parts of the body to the central nervous system.<sup>1</sup> Drumming has also been reported to reduce the severity of the symptoms of Parkinson's Disease.<sup>2</sup> The sound of drumming creates strong repetitive neuronal firing in the auditory pathway that could block out other stimuli.<sup>3</sup>

Listening to drumming synchronises the hemispheres of the brain.<sup>4,5</sup> This results in a **sense of balance** that also links the conscious and the subconscious minds and enables the **intuitive knowing** of what to do (next). For a woman in labour this knowing takes her deeper into her self, where she shuts out the outside world. This is exactly what will best facilitate labour and birth, reduced neo-cortical activity, and the unimpeded involuntary process of labour and birth.

## Women's Experiences

*“My partner drummed for me to journey out shamanically and connect with my baby when I was in early labour (approximately 12 hours prior to birth). ‘Meeting’ my baby only hours prior to her birth was a very powerful experience which offered me much peace, confidence and power for the labour that followed. I felt us journey the labour ‘together’ – I felt very connected to her in every moment, the psychic channel between us was clear and strong the whole way.*

*During this early labour journey I was shown what the process of her incarnation would be spiritually in the moments just prior to her birth and I carried this vision as my beacon through the labour. It became a point of focus and an encouragement to stay open and in **trust of the process that was unfolding**. This journey also offered me a strong connection to the Earth, my Spirit Allies and my Ancestors who I felt surround me throughout my labour and offer me strength and confidence during this time.*

*I laboured mostly in solitude with this **spiritual support as my anchor** and felt very **safe, held, powerful, confident**. I felt very expanded and at one with everything around me...**unity consciousness**...and very inner and focused.*

*My first stage labour was painless and my daughter was born quickly and with ease at home in a pool with my immediate family in attendance (planned freebirth).*

*I believe drumming has the capacity to facilitate **clear, open channels** of physical, emotional and spiritual communion between the mother and baby, her support people and her chosen mode of identification with*

*Spirit (ie. God, Goddess, Ancestors, spirit allies etc) both throughout pregnancy and into labour and birth. Drumming supports the mother's consciousness to **move beyond the identification of labour as pain** and into a more expanded, united sense of consciousness which offers her a way to transcend the physical challenges of labour and birth and connect with her role of sacred vessel for the incoming soul to arrive through at the moments of incarnation and physical birth."*

Melinda

Drumming can be used for healing, it actually **boosts your immune system**<sup>6</sup>, for prayer, for calming and for balancing.

*"Drumming during my pregnancy **connected me deeply to my myself and my baby**. I would often feel to sing while drumming and it was as if the spirit of my baby was singing with me. Drumming without a doubt **deepened my connection to the earth** also, and instantaneously. Often when I found myself rushing around in all of the "doing" that comes with preparing for a new baby I would pick up my drum and after only a few minutes of drumming I felt as if I was **coming back into my body**. The vibration seemed to open my heart and assist me in letting go of my head. In a way I find drumming like a form of meditation and it provided me with great healing and a deeper connection with myself as woman and my baby inside."*

Lizzy

*"I drummed a few days before she was born, I was past forty weeks, people were asking what I was doing, pressure to get things moving was coming in – 'have lots of sex', so much pressure to get the labour started and the baby out. It really annoyed me, I wanted to wait for her when she was ready. I explored where I was at with all this, how was this pressure effecting me? I drew some cards, Kwan Yin and Quetzalcoatl, who's card said drum. I went outside and I drummed for ages. All the dogs in the neighbourhood went crazy, howling, I drummed for a long time. Stu drummed around my body as well.*

*I knew I needed to get rid of other people's worries and fears. I was getting trapped in them, believing them. I needed to clear all that from wherever in my body I was holding it. The drumming did that, I felt so good after the drumming, I felt calm knowing **she'll come when she wants to come**. I tapped into an inner confidence, **knowing my strength**, bare foot on the earth, connecting in with the baby, I remembered its about her birth, her life, not everyone else's fears or the clock. A few days later labour started."*

Jess

## The Drumbeat

Different beats serve different purposes. A steady, single beat, has a masculine, yang energy and **sends forth the intention** the drummer holds. A rapid pace, 180 beats per minute, is used for shamanic drum journeys and will also serve the purpose of **arousing and vitalising**. A two beat rhythm like a heart beat, lub-dub, at 60 beats per minute (30 lub-dubs) has a **calming and centering** effect. A faster lub-dub, 180 beats per minute (90 lub-dubs) generates a feminine, yin, descending energy that is conducive to **healing and regeneration**.<sup>7</sup>

The drum echoes the **heartbeat of the Earth** and enables us to connect with the **rhythm of life**. Studies have shown that the Earth vibrates at a frequency of 7.8 – 12 cycles per second; the drum has a frequency of 7 – 14 cycles per second so when we listen to a drum beat we are aligning ourselves with the earth's vibration. Each time we beat the drum we send out healing vibrations to the Earth. The indigenous people of North America call the drumbeat the heartbeat of the Earth and believe that through the drum we can feel the heartbeat of the Earth.

*"During my labour and birth experience, drumming helped me come back into myself and seemed to carry me into a much deeper space within, a meditative space. It allowed me to open in places I was holding tension and the vibration connected me to the earth energy. I felt as if the vibration and the beating was the Earth*

surrounding me and it was an incredibly **powerful support** in my labour. I feel drumming opens us to the unseen realms of energy and in birth these are the places we find **strength and connection** to both our **ancestors** and to the **wisdom that lies within** us. I had a wonderful experience of drumming during pregnancy and labour and I highly recommend it as a tool for birthing women.”

Lizzy

## Creating Sacred Space

In shamanic traditions, the drum is used to call the spirits and to facilitate the transition of the shaman, via a trance state, to the other realms for the purpose of **mediation and healing**. Often referred to as the Shaman's Horse, the drum and its beat are what the shaman “rides” between the physical and spiritual worlds when she is journeying.

When Dan drummed for his partner in labour he felt, **held and focussed on his intention**. “An intention to energetically prepare the space for birth. A call for stillness, an opening of heart and a welcoming of spirit. I observed that the other people around, our older children, became aware that the space had now been called, the circle was complete, and had become a **space of sacredness**, love and purity. For the children, words are often less effective to what the call of the drum can do, especially since they had already identified with the sacred use of the drum.

I felt personally that the time had come to call upon the universe, to **disperse distractions** and nonessential tasks. The drum I used has always been used with intentions so when it comes out to play, the experience is very powerful.

I drummed softly and allowed the drum to take control. It was a rhythm similar to a drum journey, and varied slightly as the journey called. I predominantly drummed a soft drum journey rhythm. I drummed for Melinda to journey in early labour. I also drummed up the birth space in preparation and drummed during the labour in an adjoining room to Melinda.

My intention as support/husband/father was to **create an energetic space** that was **welcoming and safe**. To clear away the daily distractions, hold our older children both in presence and energetically in a calm open welcoming place and not interfere with the birthing woman's process. Melinda's journey could therefore be free to extend to the limits, this being possible only with the required knowing that her space was held strong and was ready to welcome her and baby.”

Dan

## Accessing Inner Knowing & Guidance

Pregnancy and birth are shamanic experiences, deep inner experiences that are transformational. In a shamanic drum journey a mother can **access her inner knowing** and strength and **seek and find guidance** and support **via the shamanic realms**, through connection with the Divine Feminine, her Guides, and Power Animals. She can connect with her baby during pregnancy via shamanic journeying and use this connection to communicate with her unborn one at all times.

This is a potent process and the connection formed often brings great healing. Valuable tools and information for the labour and birth can be accessed by the mother as well as such things as the baby's name and advice on who should be present at the birth. Shamanic journeying during pregnancy offers great **preparation for labour and birth** as both are best approached from a similar altered state of consciousness.

“Prior to each journey, I set sacred space and made an intention to connect with my baby and receive any information he / she needed to convey to me. Over the course of the pregnancy I was told, **shown many things**



*by my baby to support my journey of pregnancy and birth – what she would look like, her chosen names, what foods to eat more or less of in pregnancy, where she would be born, who would be present at the birth, what position would be best facilitate her birth at the time of 2nd stage (eg. I was told to “mind the shoulders” and take an upright position to provide maximum pelvic outlet space for this – I did and she was born very quickly from head to toes in one contraction), who her Power Animal was, what our Past Life connection had been, what the process of her incarnation (just prior to her birth) would be spiritually and what my role and responsibility in this would be.*

*Receiving all this information each week and “getting to know” my baby emotionally and spiritually during the journeys, was an amazing support in helping me stay conscious and connected to her and the process of my pregnancy, physically during my outer life as a busy mother of three other children. Having the ritual of journeying each week kept me “plugged in” and in tune with what was happening in my inner life when I wasn’t consciously engaged in it. I believe this influenced a lot of my daily choices in the pregnancy such as **intuitively knowing what my body needed** at any given moment and responding appropriately eg. which foods to eat more or less of, what type of exercise was needed, the choice to rest more, sleep more etc.”*

*“Of all my 4 pregnancies, I felt most strongly connected to my baby physically, emotionally, psychically, spiritually in this one I did drum journeys throughout. Drum journeying in pregnancy can offer the Mother a regular opportunity to **ritually connect** with her baby and her body to receive important information for her pregnancy, labour and birth and strengthen her connection with the soul of her unborn child.”*

Melinda

With the shamanic mother-baby connection established during pregnancy, the journey to birth for them both, can be **healing, empowering and enlightening**, all that Mother Nature intended.

*“During the labour with our second baby I needed drumming. I was beginning to feel disheartened that the labour was progressing slowly and longer than I had expected. My focus on working with the waves was there though always in my periphery, was the thought that it was taking ‘longer’. The drum, the beat, was like the pulsating of the heart. It was pulsating energy through me and through the space. I felt **grounded and alive, primal and rhythmical**.*

*At this point as I write, I still feel and hear the echoes of the drum and re-member our labour journey. It is strikingly clear to me, how powerful this technique was in connecting me with my **ancient grandmothers, mother wisdom and my labour process**. It tuned me out of my head and into my body, it maintained the labour waves and strengthened me and my process. My contractions were powerful but not painful, intense and exciting. My baby loves the sound of the drum!*

*I feel that the drumming vibration is like the beating, **pulsating of the heart**. It allows a woman to enter this heart-space and feel free to receive messages from her mind/body. It allows her to transcend her normal state of consciousness/ ordinary thinking and **be present** to, well... the present. It allows breathing to regulate itself. And what arrives are unexpected images and information. I feel this can be enhanced by having drumming time during the pregnancy to deepen the connection with the baby and then continue this as a point of communication during the labour.”*

Sophia

During labour, journeying deep within to the beat of the drum, the mother easily experiences the **altered state of consciousness** that is part of the birth process. As the labouring mother focuses on the rapid drum beat, her brain waves alter and she shifts her awareness deeply inward to the place where physical pain is reduced and fears are gone. She taps into an inner knowing of how to best to flow with the labour and often she feels a connection with all women who have birthed before.

*“My partner drummed for me for a while in my labour. I felt like I could just close my eyes and go inside my body more. I stopped thinking while he was drumming. I felt really relaxed. He was drumming slowly, I wanted it faster, it wasn’t matching the intensity of the contractions and the whole experience. I was in late first stage and felt I wanted the **drumming to match the intensity**.”*

*My shamanic sisters were drumming for me too (remotely), I think I could feel it, I felt **held, so comfortable**, my labour didn’t take over me, I was able to be with it. I could see them all in the room with me. It felt amazing to have all those women thinking of us and holding us, being present for us. We didn’t call our midwife and support person to come to the labour because it felt like everyone was there. They came just before she was born. I was so comfortable and relaxed, I didn’t have an intense labour, just 2 hours of active labour.*

*I feel like having everyone drumming for me **kept me really present** and just gave me the **space to let go**. I was anticipating lots of pain and it just never came. The contractions were intense, full on, but not lots of pain. I didn’t have to push, I just let go and my body did it. I thought – **I don’t need to work I just need to let it happen**. With everyone drumming and thinking of me, maybe what happened was people helped the pain go away. I was scared of the pain coming and maybe it got drummed away with peoples’ intentions to help me with that.”*

Jess

## **The Healing Power of The Drum**

Drumming for women in labour can be done **remotely**, holding the intention that the healing vibration be sent to her.

*“I have drummed in support for birthing women at a distance and felt a sense of offering each woman **psychic and energetic support**. I have felt I was participating in helping to weave together and around her, her sacred circle of spiritual support that offered her sustenance at times of flagging energy and confidence. The women have reported back that they have felt this “extra” presence in their birth space and it has been a wonderful support for them in their labour especially during times of feeling tired, frightened, and despondent.”*

Melinda

*“During my pregnancy I did a couple of drum journeys with the intention of journeying to meet my babe. It was a profound experience that helped me to make a strong initial connection with my baby in those first early weeks of the pregnancy. The second journey was much later in the pregnancy and was equally as profound. I was able to really communicate with my babe and I received messages from her for the other members of the family she was about to be born into.*

*This was my third pregnancy, and I have always felt very connected and intuitive during pregnancy, but doing the drum journeying this time, for the first time during pregnancy, did alter my birth expectation as I was more fully aware of how powerful this being was and was very focused on working with this baby to deliver her into the world. I knew I was influenced by my experiences with the drum during pregnancy because even though on a more logical level it felt strange to me, I wanted to use a drum during labour, intuitively it felt right so I went with it.”*

Pip

The healing power of the drum and the capacity for transformation that labour and birth hold for a mother can **shift beliefs and fears** that have been long held.

*“Drumming during labour for my doula clients enables me to **tune into where they are ‘at’** in their labour, what they are feeling and even to sense obstacles they may be experiencing. I have felt these things when I have*

*drummed both remotely (away from the labouring woman) and when I have been with them. Here are two birth stories where the drum played a healing role.*

*During one labour, when I was present, and the mother was experiencing very slow progress, we used the Goddess cards to find out what the issue was that was preventing the birth from progressing, they were amazingly accurate and one of the cards actually said to use a Native American drum preferable with deer skin to drum away and **transmute some grief**. It was amazing... the mum stood crying while she drummed, crying, drumming, healing... at the perfect point her 3 year old daughter walked in and touched her leg. I sat with her after this and asked if I could drum some more around her.*

*An issue with her mother came up as we talked and she sat as I drummed around her aura. In some places the sound changed or went off so I felt that the rhythm needed to be different, I drummed in that place until I felt that it cleared, then continued with a faster pace. It was mostly over her left shoulder. My client said that she felt that she was giving her grief and emotions to the drum. I asked afterwards if we needed to do some EFT tapping to clear the emotions and she tried to access them again and they were gone! However things still moved slowly. So I knew there was more work to do.*

*A text message came through from a midwife and she accidentally deleted it twice instead of responding which made her start talking about that midwife. She had had a difficult experience with the midwife at her with first birth and was not feeling comfortable with one in her group practice that she knew was on duty right then. We used the cards again and they spoke about changing the way we deal with challenges and doing things yourself. We chose to drum again. She said she felt lighter and more grounded. Half an hour or so later she was in established labour. Things progressed really fast, two hours later, she decided it was time to go to hospital (planned hospital birth). On walking to the door she began pushing! We called the ambulance and a short while later she was holding her beautiful baby girl in her arms on her lounge room floor.*

*Another baby was born in the back of an ambulance on the side of the road on the way to the hospital. The Mum had spent 12 hours in hospital the previous night and had decided to go home when her labour had stopped. The next day she hadn't slept and was very teary and not coping. She was having contractions every twenty minutes. The hospital said for her to take some panadeine and go to sleep. So Dad went off to buy some. Making this plan eased her fears a bit and her contractions had started coming closer together, 10mins or so apart. With Dad out the house I took the opportunity to use the goddess card Mum pulled earlier and I got my birthing drum out of the car. The card was Sekmet, and spoke about hidden anger.*

*The mum didn't resonate with the idea of hidden anger and so it took awhile of just chatting before she opened up, also I think it took the dad to be out of the house, that gave her the space to feel. Then it came up about her father, she was angry that he was moving away at this time when she needed him. The Sekmet card says to drum and repeat 'I am angry' and let Sekmet witness your anger... so she did this and there was a little shift... but I still felt that we had not gotten to the real issue.*

*Then I was drumming around her and noticed a change in sound around her left knee, to me the left knee means mother. I thought about how her mother had passed away and asked how she felt about the possibility of her mother being in the room with her, in spirit, as she birthed, and she began to cry a lot. She did not want her mother there. She was angry at her mother. She said her mother was very overbearing and overprotective and among other things had said that her daughter had such a low pain threshold and this judgement was worrying her. She said from this, that she doubted her ability to handle the pain of childbirth.*

*It also explained why she was clinging to the tens machine the entire labour. I drummed around her knee some more and then we decided to move into a different room. Her contractions got closer together immediately after this. She got into a great position hanging over the edge of the bed to bring baby forward and we turned out the lights to help her relax. The pressure was off her labour progressing, and now the contractions were 5 minutes apart. Not long after, she had to get up and move as she was getting really uncomfortable. She*

*was very tired and just wanted to collapse but she couldn't lay down through contractions. I coaxed the tens machine from her and helped her into the shower to revive and comfort her.*

*Before she got into the shower we spoke about how we should go in to the hospital after the shower and if she was not progressing then it was probably time to get some help. This helped her to feel ok with where she was at and she felt a shift, all her tension went. Once in the shower and with the tens machine off the contractions came on stronger and faster. I woke the Dad who was finally getting some sleep. He packed the car. Before we left I said if she starts pushing pull over, two minutes down the road he pulled over and she was vomiting. Another five minutes down the road and he pulled over again, She was beginning to bear down. We rolled down the front seat, helped her get one of her feet up on dash and encouraged her to just breath through the contractions. Dad called an ambulance.*

*The ambulance arrived and forced her to get out of car even though she didn't want to and the baby's head was on view. I followed the ambulance, it screamed down the road lights flashing doing 100kms. Then three minutes later, the very next contraction, they pull over and a beautiful baby boy was born. I was sitting in the car behind just sending lots of love and energy to them. Then one of the ambulance people came to my car and told me they'd delivered the baby and asked if I had a camera! So I went and took photos in back of ambulance for them!"*

*So, I've seen in my practice as a doula, the wonderful way the drum **enables women to relax**, access and release the issues they have that have been blocking their labour from progressing. The drum almost effortlessly **shifts and transmutes the negative energy or fears**.*

Cattalia

*"Drumming and Journeying – offers the Mother and her support people a "tool" to use in labour and birth that provides information via "**internal enquiry**" without the need to physically enter the mother's body (vaginal examination) or disturb her instinctive behaviour at any time. This encourages the Mother to bring forth her own answers and maintain **a sense of autonomy and empowerment** throughout her experience.*

*Fathers and siblings could also use drumming and drum journeys to strengthen their spiritual connection with the baby. Drumming in a labour in the birth space could through the process of entrainment encourage a "**united consciousness**" between the Mother and the support people in her space – better supporting the intuitive connections and behaviours that can occur between them at this time."*

Melinda

You can journey with either a live drum or a recorded drum beat. For labour, the best drumming is live, a drum and **an intuitive drummer** who you know and trust, who you feel comfortable to have in your birth space. This way the actual vibration of the drum beats will help reduce the pain of the contractions. If that isn't possible you can reach the same level of focus with a recorded drum beat.

*There is something very **primal** about a drum beat which I think brings that aspect to the fore in labour which I think is also a very primal experience.*

Pip

## **Shamanic Cosmology**

The shamanic world view sees the Earth as alive, and all beings, creatures, plants, matter, etc also as alive, with a spirit and part of the whole, the 'divine', the 'all that is'. The **interconnectedness of everything** is the basis of the 'structure' and shows us both the opportunity and the responsibility. Throughout and within the whole of existence and experience is **a pattern and a weaving** of the thread of the divine. This holds both mystery and power. The patterns that reveal themselves in our lives and our being-ness can be seen in the



patterns of nature, the cycles, the structures of life and are often reflections, mirror images of what is around us. There are three realms.

**The Lower Realm** is the place of animal spirits and helpers, spirit guides and guardians, power animals, the dead. It may also be called the Underworld. Journeying to the Lower Realm is done **to find one's power animal, to recover lost power**, and to find and retrieve parts and aspects of someone for the purpose of 'soul retrieval'.

**The Middle Realm** is both the reality in which we live and the spiritual parallel to it. We can access other parts and places of our 'ordinary' reality shamanically. We may do this to effect positive change in places that need that; investigate a situation in process – be 'a fly on the wall' so to speak. And we may access the magical **spirit realm of the plants, creatures and minerals** that also inhabit the Middle Realm as well as our **Inner Goddess, Inner Shaman and inside our body**.

**Upper Realm** is the place of archetypal knowledge and patterns, **spirit guides, teachers, Gods and Goddesses, angels**, 'the matrix of possibilities', and **un-manifest potential**. Journeying to the Upper Realm can be done to meet your teachers and various archetypes, for the purpose of learning, clarification, inspiration and insight.

The three realms are linked together by a vertical axis, the 'axis mundi,' or the '**World Tree**' and can be easily accessed using the image of a tree, the Upper Realm as the branches and above, the Middle Realm as the trunk, the Lower Realm as the roots of the tree. We can also see this image in ourselves, with the Upper Realm above us, the Lower Realm below us and our presence in the Middle Realm.

The worlds or realms of the shaman are both actual and metaphoric and are accessible by everyone. The Shamanic Journey is an inner journey.

## Guide to Shamanic Journeying

Journeying to the beat of the drum is a simple and easy way to access the other realms. Scientific studies have shown that as we listen to a rapid monotonous drum beat our **brain waves slow down**, and move from the normal state of consciousness (Beta state) into a **deep meditative state (Alpha state)** or even a **deeper hypnotic state (Theta State)**.

In these trance states we are free to enter into the parallel universe of non-ordinary reality enabling us to have visions and access to the archetypal field of information. You can choose to journey with a specific intention such as to meet your baby inside if you are pregnant, your Inner Goddess or simply to meet what is "there" for you at any given time.

Sometimes during a journey you may encounter a Being or Presence that you feel unsure of. If this happens, ask this entity "*Are you for my highest good?*" If they are not, they will disappear. If they are, they will stay and you can ask them a question, like "*What are you here to show / tell me?*"

If you know your **power animal**; it is customary to travel with her to the other realms each time you journey. She may guide you, assist you and be able to access further information during your encounters in the realm you visit. You may also **shapeshift** into your power animal for or during a journey.

To start your journey, create a vision in your mind of a favourite place in nature. Depending on which realm you intend to travel to (Lower, Middle or Upper), will decide which way you go from here.

To journey to the **Lower Realm**, the initial process is to '**descend**' - down a hole in the earth, a tunnel or via a tree root.

To journey to the **Upper Realm**, you ‘**ascend**’, perhaps up a tall tree. Once you have reached the top there is generally a passage through clouds or a fog before arriving into the Upper Realm.

To journey to the **Middle Realm**, you may go **inside your body** or via a **place in nature** wherever the journey takes you.

Regardless of which realm you initially head off to and the original reason for which you have chosen to journey, you will always have the journey you need to have. In the shamanic world, the possibilities are endless and varied. There are no set rules or definites. Perhaps instead of visiting the Middle Realm, on the way there you suddenly find yourself in the Upper Realm. Or maybe you have set off to ask a question of your Inner Goddess and your Power Animal arrives to share some wisdom instead.

Flow with what happens and trust that whatever unfolds will be perfect; there will always be information there for you.

To return from your journey, it is important to **retrace your steps back** to your body into this world, so remember to go back up the tunnel or down the tree the same way you came.

Once back into your present moment awareness, it’s a good idea to immediately write your experience in your **journal**. Drawing or painting a picture can be very useful too. **Grounding the experience** in this way helps you remember and interpret later what happened in your journey.

## A Shamanic Drum Journey To Meet Your Baby

- To begin, cleanse yourself of any negative energy. This can be done by smudging or through wilful intention by speaking the words *“I cleanse myself of all negative energies”*.
- State three times to yourself: *“I am travelling to my womb to meet with my Baby”*.
- Lie down, or sit if you’d prefer and cover yourself for warmth. If you are in the company of others, be careful to not touch anyone else - you may go on the same journey if you do!
- Relax your body. Melt into where you are. Check your body for any held tension and let it go.
- Take your **awareness to your breath**. Deepen your in breath. Slow your breathing down. Relax
- The drumming will be at a rapid rate. Focus on the beating of the drum. If you start thinking, or getting distracted, just **bring your focus back** to the drum beat. Single pointed focus on the drum beat.
- For the journey into your womb to meet your Baby you need take your awareness to your vulva, enter, travel up your vagina, checking it out on the way through, attend to any housekeeping you may need to do. Notice what there is to notice. Come to your cervix, make friends with your cervix, know where it is, what it looks like, and arrange that you will be in communication during your labour as you open to bring your baby earthside.
- Then go through your cervix, and enter your womb. Once inside your womb, call out to your baby – *“Mummy’s here”* Call the baby to be with you.
- Tell your baby what you want to tell them. Ask them questions – *how can I best help you be born? Where do you want to be born? What do I need to know now for our journey together?* Enjoy their company.

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If you encounter anything on your journey that concerns you, or you are not sure of, ask it *“are you for my highest good?”* if it is, it will stay and you can ask it a question, if its not for your highest good it will disappear.

- When the journey is over and it's time to come back I will change the drumming from fast to slow. At that point **say *Thank you*** and say *Goodbye*, perhaps arrange another meeting, and retrace your steps, coming back the way you went in.
- Once back into your present moment awareness, wiggle your fingers and toes and take some deep breaths. **Write down what you can remember** in your journal.

Remember you can return to your journal writing again at any stage. Often you can recall more details later after you have written down the initial entry.

If you feel a bit shaky or faint, drink some water, splash some on your face and eat something. If you are still not feeling fully present and in your body then lie down on your belly on the earth and if necessary have someone shake a rattle all around you.

## My Story

I had journeyed with the drum often and deeply before and during my pregnancy with Jackson, my third baby, in 1992. My learning about shamanic practices had really started around the time that Jackson was a 'twinkle in my eye' a couple of years before. Knowing what I know now, nineteen years on, I would say that was all connected.

The shamanic drum journeys I did during my pregnancy, greatly **informed the choices** I made around the pregnancy and his birth. I received specific information about particular herbs to take for healing, psychological shifts required by me to proceed in an integrated way, and amongst other things who to invite to be present at the birth. During one particular journey, late in my pregnancy, when I travelled to the Middle Realm to meet my baby, I 'saw' him in a most remarkable scene.

I saw an open two-story building with perhaps 100 or more people dressed in orange robes. It seemed that they were gathered for a purpose. The one I'd come to meet was moving through the group from the top floor to the ground floor and finally out the front door. He was saying goodbye to them. Once he left the building through the front door he came toward me. It felt amazing to have a glimpse of this process, perhaps leaving one life to come to the next?

As a mother I was loving the **deep connection** I was experiencing with my baby and the process. As a midwife I have to admit I was doing an experiment.

I planned to have my shamanic teacher, Blackbear, our friend, to be present at the birth to drum for me in labour. I hadn't experienced that before, but felt the desire. Blackbear arrived a couple of hours before Jackson was born and drummed while I laboured in the birth pool. The drumming was loud and fast and gave me a **focal point beyond the pain** I was experiencing with the contractions. I was completely inward, not speaking to anyone. During each contraction I toned loudly with the drum. Making these sounds helped me **stay in the present moment** which enabled me to 'bear the pain'.

At transition, I told myself I couldn't go on, that I would surely die, I 'pulled myself together' and focussed all my attention on my cervix, and then a miracle happened. I had a shamanic experience, I saw a vision that I had had during a pregnancy shamanic bodywork session of an eye, and holding the vision, I launched myself through the eye. This resulted in a change in consciousness, and me feeling absolutely no pain from the contractions. I experienced what I later learned to be known as **Unity Consciousness**. In that mind space I continued to labour and give birth to Jackson, with no pain, in a space of complete bliss, nothingness and everythingness, all at once, at one with Jackson, my body and the birth process.

What I know now is that the drumming, in connection with what wants to happen, the biological blueprint in labour and birth, resulted in me reaching a mind space, where I knew what to do to best **be with the**

**process** of giving birth. And that was to focus with all my attention on the part of me that was the centre point of the physical experience, the 'eye of the storm' so to speak. This then launched me into the state of consciousness that best facilitated the birth of Jackson, the birth he'd come for.

Our births are our rites of passage to this life and they inform us in so many ways, **how we engage with creativity, how we understand love, how we do process**. Our experience of birth becomes our default setting, as it were, for how we 'birth' things, ways and ourselves over and over. And now at 19, I see Jackson express this in all his pursuits, he seeks the 'eye of the storm' whenever he needs to balance himself, he uses the gateways to other realities and states of consciousness to access information and abilities, he seeks transcendence through daily meditation and qigong practices whilst pursuing his dream to be a professional snowboarder, using levels of mind control and focus befitting of one in orange robes.

And my experience of giving birth to Jackson, with all its **shamanic dimensions**, launched me, as midwife, into lots of research to understand and writing to explain and share what I had learned. My practice as a midwife changed to incorporate the shamanic dimensions of birth, I began workshops to teach it, wrote my book "[\*Ten Moons: The Inner Journey of Pregnancy\*](#)" in 2007 and founded *The School of Shamanic Woman-craft* in 2009.

Blessed Be

*(If you appreciated these thoughts, please [subscribe to my newsletter](#) – I'd love to stay in touch! xxx Jane)*