



Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Honoring Our Animal Guides

Starr King Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Hayward, CA, Kathryn LaMar, **03 April 2019**

CHALICE LIGHTING

1 min

Allow the power to flow through you. Don't try to capture it. You wish only to borrow it.

G.G. Collins, [Reluctant Medium](#)

SILENT MEDITATION / CENTERING

2 min

The first sound of the gong brings us to silence. Please take time to center yourself, and temporarily push aside whatever might be preventing you from participating fully in **tonight's** session. The second sound of the gong returns us to each other's presence.

OPENING WORDS:

1 min

I think I could turn and live with animals, ☺ they're so placid and self-contained, ☺ I stand and look at them long and long. ☺ They do not sweat and whine about their condition, ☺ They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins, ☺ They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God, ☺ Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things, ☺ Not one kneels to another, ☺ nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago, ☺ Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth. *Walt Whitman (Song of Myself)*

CHECK-IN (2 ROUNDS)

36 min

Please share some thing(s) about your life since last we met. If you feel comfortable about it, mention something that may have changed your relationship to living an integrated, whole life.

INTRODUCTION:

20 min

From <https://exemplore.com/spirit-animals/Finding-Your-Spirit-GuideAnimal-Totem>, except for section from Lee Standing Bear Moore

From Danielle Lopez: An animal spirit guide—also called a power animal or animal totem—is a messenger or teacher who comes to us in the form of an animal to guide and protect us throughout our lives. They may provide comfort, inspiration, or important messages in difficult times. They may also draw attention to parts of ourselves that require acknowledgment or exploration.

Your spirit guide is an animal that resonates with you and has special significance in your life. Your relationship with the guide connects you with the earth and with nature. Ultimately, this animal is a reflection of ourselves—a representation of who we are and who we might become.

Although found primarily in Native American and Aboriginal cultures, spirit guides are not limited to

these traditions. They are present for anyone who seeks them, anyone who yearns for a deeper connection with the earth and with Mother Nature.

From Lee Standing Bear Moore and Takatoka: There are four basic types of animal guides. Messenger Guide (Totem), Shadow Guide, Journey Guide, and Life Guide.

A Messenger Guide quickly comes into your life, then leaves once a message is understood. The time a Message Guide stays in your psychic is relative to you seeing and accepting the message. The message itself can be spiritual in nature, or it can be a warning. They can be both negative and positive in nature for they are totally impartial.

A Shadow Guide is one that invades you with fear. Its purpose is to teach a lesson you have not learned from repeated mistakes because of anger, avarice, greed, insecurity, or other negative thoughts. A Shadow Guide will return again and again bearing strong feelings of fear until its message is acted upon or a change in lifestyle or actions are incorporated into your life. If ignored the Shadow Guide can become dangerous and its powers will have a negative affect on your life.

A Journey Guide appears at the fork in the road of your life. If you become lost along the way, the Journey Guide can help lead the way back. Unlike a Messenger Guide, who comes and leaves quickly, the Journey Guide remains at your side until the current cycle in your life has changed.

A Life Guide is also called a Spirit Guide as it remains a part of you throughout life and reflects your inner-spiritual self. You may have more than one Life Guide, and new ones may come. Usually a Life Guide remains an integral part of your life, but sometimes a particular Life Guide is no longer needed and is replaced with a new one. Its powers are always there for you and serve as a constant reminder of your inner powers and oneness with nature. A Life Guide will often call upon other animal guides found within its domain to help give you special messages from time to time.

How Do I Find My Animal Spirit Guide? The first step is to respectfully ask your spirit guide to show itself to you. Once you've set your intention, you can begin to look in certain places where your spirit guide may allow itself to be discovered, including:

Dreams: Do you often dream of a certain animal? Paying attention to the animals that appear in your dreams, particularly animals that recur frequently, can give you important insights.

Meditation: Like dreams, meditation offers access to an altered state of consciousness. Your spirit guide may reveal itself to you during your meditative journey.

Nature: Take walks outside and observe the animals around you. Being in nature is one of the greatest ways to find your spirit guide because the whole purpose behind a spirit guide is to provide you with a deeper connection to Mother Earth.

Past connections: Did you have a favorite animal when you were younger, or did you have a favorite pet? Perhaps there is an animal you feel drawn to without understanding why. When you visit the zoo or an aquarium, is there an animal you like to visit first or make sure you get to see?

Fears: Is there an animal that has always frightened you—but been intriguing to you at the same time?

Most often the animal that you're most fearful of will bring you closest to nature.

Encounters: Is there an animal that you frequently see near your home or that often seems to be watching you? Or, taking a different take on the word "encounter," did you ever experience an attack by an animal at any time in the past? Being bitten or attacked by an animal could represent the totem testing your ability to handle its power.

Zodiac: The Native American Zodiac reveals which animal is associated with your birthdate. This is not necessarily your spirit guide, but often it will be an animal that represents you fairly well.

Shaman: A shaman or qualified spiritual guide can help you identify your animal totem.

If your request is authentic and respectful, your spirit guide will ultimately show itself to you. Don't forget aquatic animals, insects, and birds—every creature on this earth, whether they travel by land, sea, or air, has the ability to be a powerful spirit guide.

Each guide has a different meaning, and they can mean something different for different people. Below are a few examples of animal spirit guides and the common meanings behind their animal totems.

Bear: Bears teach us how to be balanced, no matter what life throws at us. They also are very wise, protective of the ones they love, and they harbor incredible strength during difficult times.

Buffalo: Those with a buffalo totem tend to harbor tension, so they need to be careful about finding a safe release in order to prevent it from building up to intolerable levels. Buffaloes are strong and protective of their tribe. They have incredible strength and are likely to face their problems head-on.

Butterfly: The butterfly totem represents freedom, creativity, and transformation. They teach us to work closely with the earth and try to minimize our harmful impact on the planet.

Coyote: Those with the coyote totem tend to be cunning, loyal, and very goal oriented. They are focused on their community, but they have no qualms about deceiving an outsider if it means protecting themselves or their loved ones. They know their environment very well and teach us to work in unity with the earth.

Crow: Someone with a crow totem tends to be very magically inclined. They are dedicated to following order and tend to be strong healers.

Deer: Those with the deer totem are intuitive, sensitive, and spiritual.

Dolphin: The dolphin symbolizes playfulness and lightheartedness.

Dove: The dove represents peace and blessings. A person who is going through a stressful time might call upon the dove spirit for guidance.

Eagle: A person with an eagle animal spirit tends to thrive when they're alone. They prefer isolation over community. Eagles have incredible eyesight, providing those with the eagle totem to see clearly in situations that are murky and difficult.

Fox: Those with the fox totem prefer to keep to themselves and blend in, rather than standing out

from the crowd. They are sensitive yet agile, and they are capable of finding a way forward in the midst of a difficult situation.

Horse: Those with the horse spirit guide thrive when they are left wild. They can be headstrong, but they are willing to bend for those that they care about. While they prefer to be left wild, they respond well to a partner who treats them with patience and kindness. The horse totem also represents positive change in someone's life.

Owl: Those with the owl totem tend to be very quiet and secretive, but when they speak, people listen and treat them with respect. Owls teach us to embrace the dark and to know that it isn't something to fear, nor is it something that is evil.

Raven: The raven totem represents mystery, wisdom, and transformation. People with the raven animal spirit guide tend to be strong teachers and are often sought out for their wisdom and intelligence.

Snake: Snake spirit guides represents transformation, rebirth, and sexuality. They are strong creatures with strong personalities, but they often lash out during difficult situations. Snake totems teach us to work closely with the earth and to learn to understand the earth's vibrations.

Tiger: The tiger spirit represents raw energy and emotion. This totem connects us with our intuitions and instincts.

Turtle: Those with the turtle spirit guide tend to be minimalists. They prefer to be on the road and to have minimal possessions or people to hold them back from their desire to travel. The turtle totem teaches us to look within and to be happy with the person we truly are.

Wolf: The wolf totem has a strong connection to family and their pack. They tend not to socialize well with others outside of their small inner circle. The wolf spirit guide represents strength, loyalty, and community.

Once you've found your spirit guide, it is imperative that you honor them. The more you do so, the more clearly you will hear their messages and the more effective their power will be in your life. You can honor your spirit guide in many ways, including:

- Read everything you can about the animal.
- Drawing pictures of the animal helps you become more deeply connected to their physical form.
- Decorate your home with images and representations of the animal.
- Learning to imitate the animal's physical movements and behaviors can create a powerful spiritual link to your guide.

Remember, however, that there is an important distinction between honor and worship. Spirit guides are not meant to be worshiped; in fact, they are our equals—their purpose is to bring humans and nature together as one. Rather, the intention is to learn from our spirit guide in order to come into harmony with the Earth Mother.

Steve Farmer: Is it cultural appropriation to ask for a spirit guide? No. Spirit guides do not discriminate against ethnicity, culture, or background; they are there for anyone who is seeking to deepen their connection with Mother Earth. If you respectfully ask your spirit animal to show itself to you, and if you are prepared to show honor to your guide, you will find what you are looking for.

GUIDED MEDITATION TO IDENTIFY SPIRIT ANIMALS: **12 min**

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsHJHcGCGU8>>

QUOTES TO PONDER

Since the so-called Age of Enlightenment, our shaky anthropocentric, rationalist egos have been brainwashed to forget what 'primitive' cultures once understood: Animals can be manifestations of celestial beings in disguise; they possess supernatural abilities, and they can be our spiritual guides and healers.

Zeena Schreck

With the demise of the biblical religions that have provided the American people with their core values since their country's inception, we are reverting to the pagan worldview. Trees and animals are venerated, while man is simply one more animal in the ecosystem - and largely a hindrance, not an asset.

Dennis

Prager

Birds are the most popular group in the animal kingdom. We feed them and tame them and think we know them. And yet they inhabit a world which is really rather mysterious.

David Attenborough

People come to me and say, 'What'll I do if I go in the water and see a shark?' You don't have to do anything. The chances of that shark attacking you in any way is so remote. The sea should be enjoyed, the animals in it. When you see a shark underwater, you should say, 'How lucky I am to see this beautiful animal in his environment!'

Eugenie

Clark

I have a spirit guide. His name is Gray Eagle. This is why some people think I am a really crazy person, but he is the one who helps me and guide me. So I'm talking to the spirit world all the time.

Rosemary Altea

PREPARATION FOR GROUP REFLECTION **1 min**

BREAK **10 min**

GROUP REFLECTION ON SPIRIT ANIMALS / FEEDBACK **36 min**

Two rounds. Choose one or more of the following suggestions to share with us your views on your own spirit animals that are sharing your life's journey. Or, talk about your personal views on shamanism, animism, or other perspectives on the idea of humans occupying both the physical and spirit worlds.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON SPIRIT GUIDES

1. Looking back on your life so far, did or do you often dream of a certain animal? How did those dreams affect the development of your own philosophy of life or your own theology?
2. Like dreams, meditation offers access to an altered state of consciousness. If you practice meditation, have you ever set the intention of a session to be identification of one of your animal guides? What did you learn from that experience?
3. During walks in nature, have you ever experienced a deeper connection to Mother Earth? Was an experience with an animal involved in this transformation?
4. Did any of the quotations resonate with you? Can you think of any other famous poems or quotations you wish had been included?
5. Did you have a favorite animal when you were younger, or did you have a favorite pet? Perhaps there is an animal you feel drawn to without understanding why. When you visit the zoo or an aquarium, is there an animal you like to visit first or make sure you get to see?
6. Is there an animal that has always frightened you—but been intriguing to you at the same time?
7. Is there an animal that you frequently see near your home or that often seems to be watching you? Or, taking a different take on the word "encounter," did you ever experience an attack by an animal at any time in the past? Being bitten or attacked by an animal could represent the totem testing your ability to handle its power. Do you think that was true for you?
8. Did the guided meditation help you identify any of your animal guides? Explore this idea.
9. How do you (or do you plan to) honor your animal spirit guides? How does this help you maintain a connection with Mother Earth?

SONG: SPIRIT ANIMALS (THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY) 5 min

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRL8KhvgkZo>

FUTURE TOPICS, SERVICE PROJECTS 2 min

SESSION FEEDBACK 2 min

EXTINGUISH CHALICE / CLOSING WORDS 1 min

It ... ushered me back to the forest, back to the life energy that connects us all as one divine consciousness and urges me to never lose sight of it and to always protect it in a world where people are forgetting and shunning the natural for the digital. In the forest, I sense the trees and the leaves and let them grow all around me and on me. Suddenly, I feel as if the trees themselves are my spirit animals and they surround me with a sense of healing energy and I feel very maternal and moved to protect the earth itself and all the people in it, especially the ones I'm close too. *Lacey Reah*