



CRAFTING A THERAPY RITUAL

Using Your Magic To Support Your Inner Work

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(she/her/dr, never ms/maam)

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PATH – Pagan Affirming Therapy & Healthcare

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The Question



How many of you have ever been sitting in a therapist's office and decided not to mention something that matters to your practice?





Agenda & Acknowledgements



- Opening & Community Agreements – 5 min
- Part 1: The Gap & Why It Exists – 10 min
- Part 2: Therapy is Already a Ritual – 10 min
- Part 3: Your Ritual Toolkits – 20 min
 - Before, During & After
- Part 4: Talking to Your Provider – 10 min
- Integration & Close – 5 min





Who's in the room?

ME – Rachel Anne Kieran, PsyD

- (she/her/dr, never ~~ms~~ or ~~maam~~)
- Psychologist in specializing in Sexual, Gender & Relational Diversity (15+ years)
- **StorieBrook Therapy & Consulting**
 - Founder & Owner
- **StorieTree Professional Education**
 - Co-Founder & Program Director
- **Pagan Affirming Therapy & Healthcare**
 - Co-Founder
- Identities & Passions



FAT
Neuro**QUEER**
BiFURIOUS
PAGAN
GENDER NONCOMPLIANT
relationship
deconstructionist
Immigrant
OVEREDUCATED
AUTISTIC
Recovering Catholic
ψ**psychologist**



YOU?

- Have a ritual practice?
- Would like to?
- Not sure how to connect this to therapy? But kinda want to?
- Needs tools to make it work?

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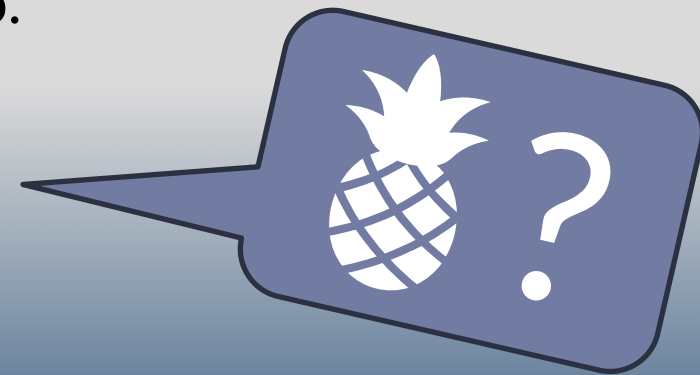




Consent check & agreements



- Modeling consent in ALL spaces
 - **Speak from your own experience.** Use “I” statements where you can.
 - **What’s shared in this room stays in this room.** What you learn goes with you.
 - This workshop engages with **queerness, neurodiversity, trauma, and spirituality.** You are welcome to engage with the parts that fit and leave the parts that don’t.
 - You are welcome to **participate in whatever way works for your body** right now
 - sitting, standing, stepping out if you need to.
 - Discomfort is allowed; **harm is not**
- How do we deal with **discomfort?**





THE GAP & WHY IT EXISTS

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What Happens When Pagan Practitioners Seek Therapy



- If you raised your hand a few minutes ago, you're not alone and you're not being paranoid. The gap is real, and it exists for real reasons.
 - Self-censoring
 - Translating
 - Pathologizing
 - Compartmentalizing



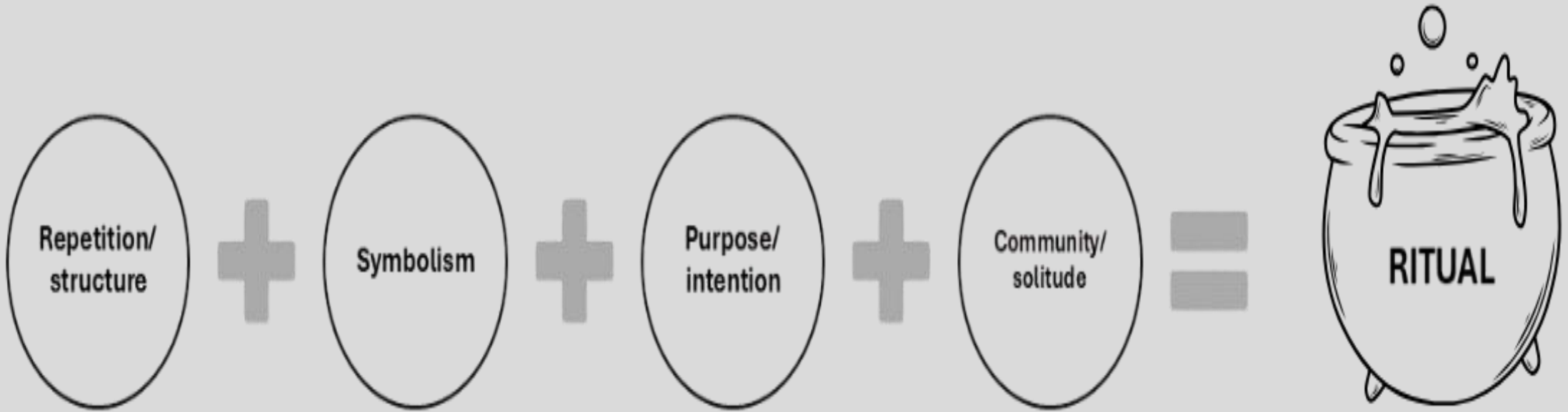


The Clinical Case for Integration



- The research on this is actually quite clear, and it supports what pagan practitioners have known experientially for a long time about
 - Spirituality
 - Meaning making
 - Ritual
 - Integration
 - Exclusion
- Your practice is not a hobby you do alongside your healing work.
It is a healing technology. It belongs in the room.





THERAPY IS ALREADY A RITUAL

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Habit, Routine, Ritual



Habit

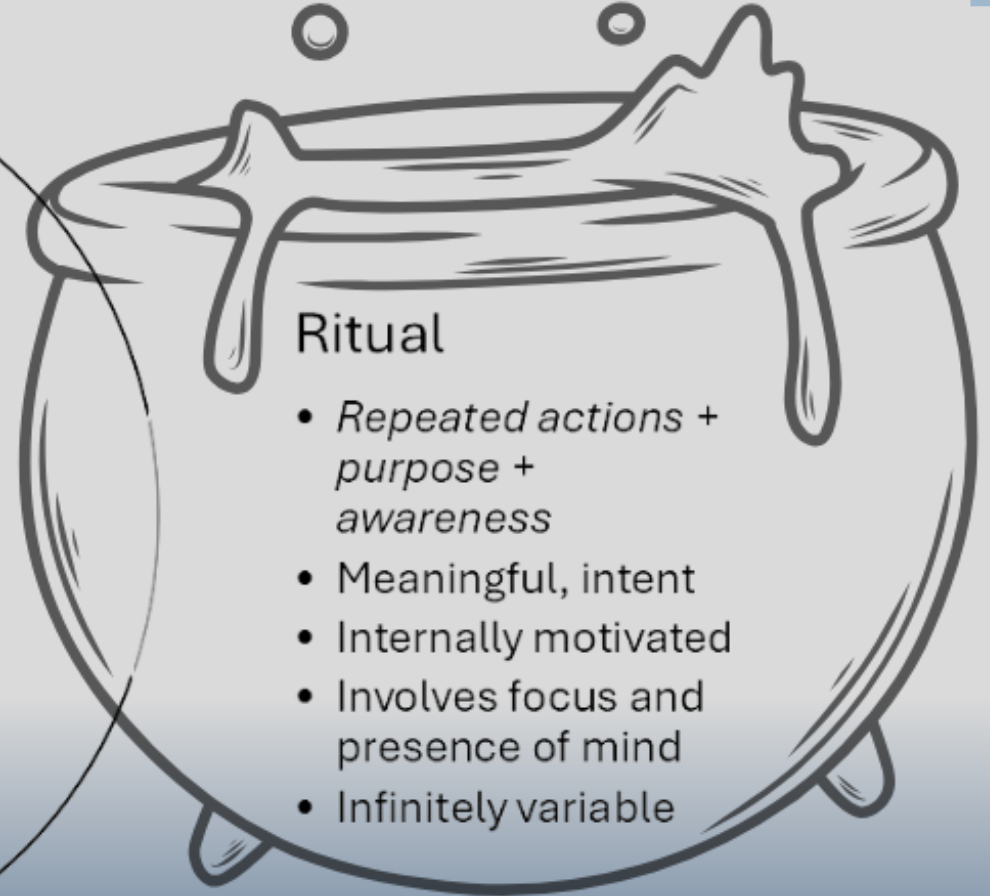
- *Repeated actions*
- Performed without conscious thought/awareness
- Does not require focus or presence of mind
- Requires little energy

Routine

- *Repeated actions + purpose*
- Created by conscious planning and practice
- Planned or reminded
- Easily changed or modified

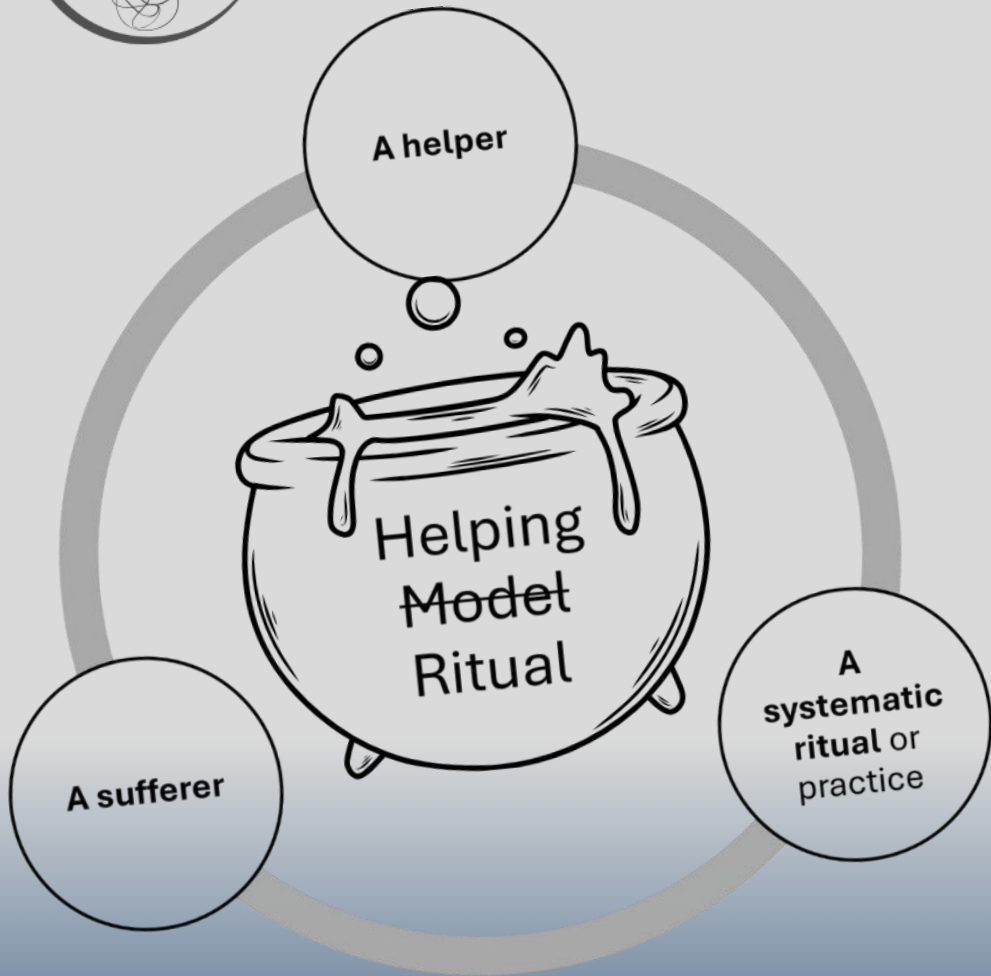
Ritual

- *Repeated actions + purpose + awareness*
- Meaningful, intent
- Internally motivated
- Involves focus and presence of mind
- Infinitely variable





The Therapeutic Cauldron



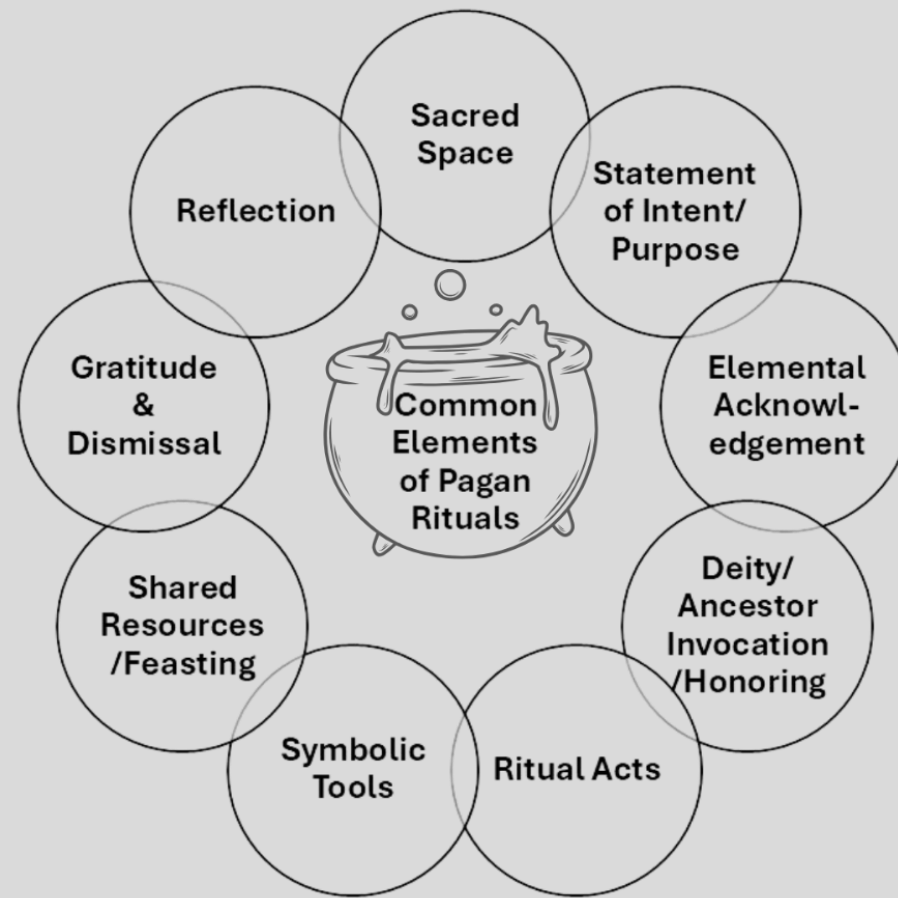
The therapeutic relationship is the cauldron.

The session is the working.

The skills, the insight, the grief, the courage — those go into the vessel.

And the ritual — how you arrive, how you engage, how you close — is how you tend the fire.





YOUR RITUAL TOOLKIT — BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER

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1. ***ARRIVING — Before the Session***



Sustainable is key. Short & mindful is better than elaborate and avoided!

In Person

- Travel & arrival mindset
- Sensory comfort
- Sacred space in waiting room/car



Virtual

- Private space
- Tech setup
- Energetic boundary setting





2. ***ENTERING — During the Session***



- How do we stay present inside the cauldron?
 - When the heat is on?
 - When we want to escape?
- Ritual elements can help anchor you in the body and the present moment when the work gets hard.

There is no wrong way to do therapy.
You are the expert on what works for you!





3. ***RELEASING — After the Session***



- Arguably the most important step!
 - What are we trying to signal to ourselves here?
 - What are we trying to keep present/alive here?
 - What might you need a reminder of?
 - What do you need to keep/leave safely in the cauldron?

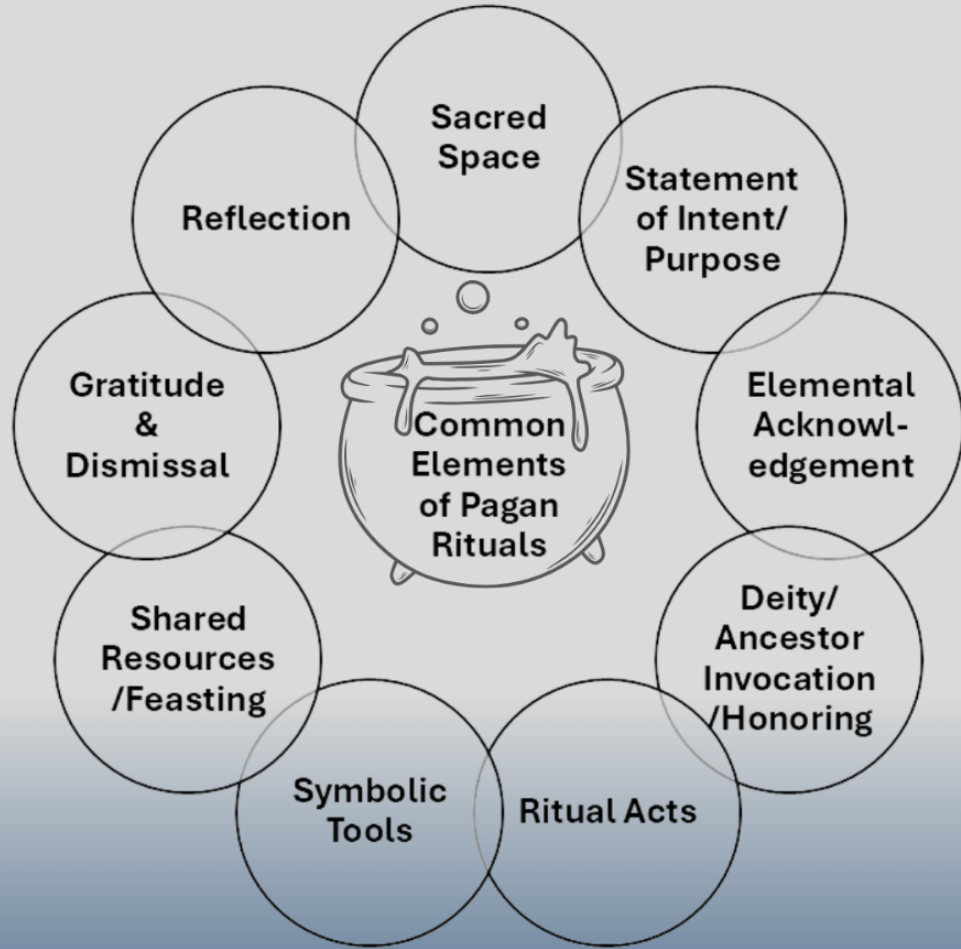


Closing therapy sessions and closing rituals have similar functions – what do we leave, and what do we carry into the world?





Elements of a (Therapy) Ritual



1. Create Sacred Space
2. Ground & Breathe
3. Light the Flame of Insight
4. Choose a Talisman or Anchor
5. Speak Your Intention
- ...
6. Close the Circle Gently





Example Beginning Ritual



1. Create Sacred Space
2. Ground & Breathe
3. Light the Flame of Insight
4. Choose a Talisman or Anchor
5. Speak Your Intention
- ...
6. Close the Circle Gently

1. Clear space (physical & energetic)



2. Grounding breath & visualization



3. Light candle or hold talisman



4. Speak intention aloud



5. Begin session in mindful presence

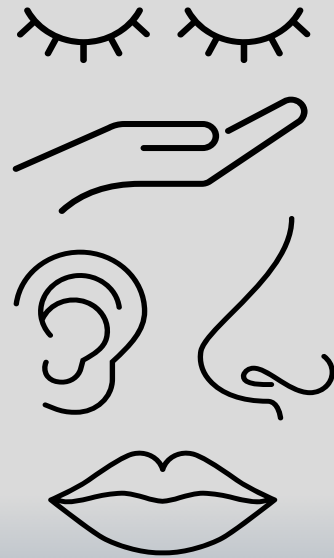




Activity: Craft Your Ritual



- Where do you most need support right now — arriving, entering, or releasing?
 - What elements of your practice already live at that threshold, even informally?
 - What is one thing you could do before, during, or after your next session that would make it more intentional?
 - What does the closing of your container need to do? What are you releasing, and what are you carrying forward?



- What sensory elements matter to you?
 - what do you see, hold, smell, or hear that reliably brings you present?
- Is there a guiding presence — deity, ancestor, element, archetype — you would want to invoke for this kind of inner work?

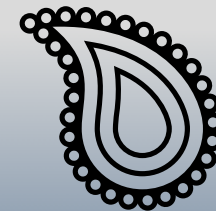
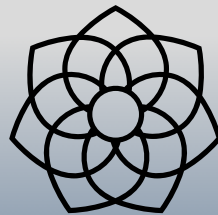




Activity: Craft Your Ritual

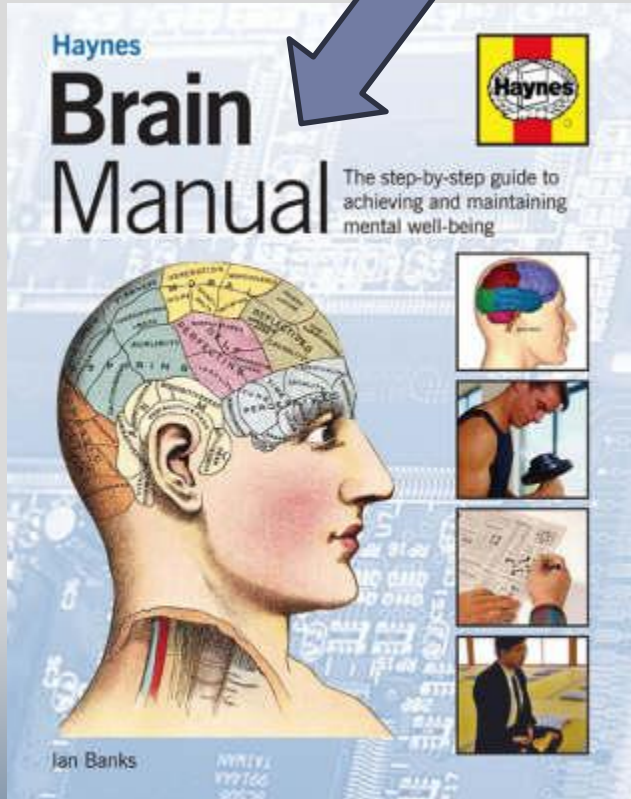


- No one is required to share
- If you want to share, **what is one element that you want to connect to that might help create presence for you in your therapy experience?**





**** This Is Not a Universal Experience**



- Consider the many ways that our experiences of ritual, and so many other areas of our lives may vary
 - Brain styles, body types, lived experiences, social & cultural expectations, and so many more.

What ritual offers is a framework.

What that framework looks like in practice depends entirely on the brain and body doing the ritual.





What ritual provides a framework FOR:



Ritual (in any area in which we use it) provides a framework FOR

- Active **CONSENT** (or withholding of consent)
- **COMMUNICATION** of needs, thoughts, feelings, experiences
- Personal **MEANING** rather than just “because” or “should”
- Active **PLANNING** and **Follow-Up**
 - Whether we are doing this with and for ourselves, therapists or in community.

What does your brain or body specifically need from a ritual container?





TALKING TO YOUR PROVIDER

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What Affirming Care Looks Like



- Having a ritual practice doesn't mean your therapist needs to practice alongside you. But it does mean your therapist needs to be able to hold what you bring without pathologizing it, dismissing it, or requiring you to translate it into secular language before they can work with it.
- Look for
 - Curiosity, thoughtful questions, and willingness to educate themselves
 - Ability to tolerate uncertainty and not knowing
 - Treating your practice/beliefs/values as a resource, not a symptom





What to Watch For



- Immediate pathologizing
 - Enforced secularism
 - Excessive generalization
 - Performative openness
 - Over-enthusiasm
 - Lack of specificity/curiosity
-
- Dealing with the surprised response





Scripts for Starting the Conversation



"I've had therapists before who weren't sure what to do with my spiritual practice, so I tend to leave it out. I'd really like not to do that this time. Can we talk about how you approach this?"

"I've been doing some ritual work around [thing you're coming to therapy for]. I'd like to be able to talk about that here. Is that something you have experience holding?"

"I work with [deity / ancestors / elements / practice]. That context matters for understanding some of what I'm going through. I want to make sure I can bring the whole picture into the room."

*"I want to let you know that I have a spiritual practice that's pretty central to my life. I'm pagan – [insert however much you want to say here]. I'm wondering if that's something we can work **with** rather than around."*





If Your Current Therapist Isn't There Yet



- Sometimes the person you're working with is genuinely good — they're helpful, you trust them — but they don't have a framework for this.
- Some options:
 - You can educate gently
 - You can compartmentalize deliberately
 - You can look for someone who already has the framework





What PATH Is



- What is PATH (and sites like it)?
 - Who we are
 - How PATH was born
 - Where PATH is on our journey
 - How you can help!!!
 - FOLLOW, REFER, SHARE (and do it again)!





PATH contact info



- www.paganaffirming.com
- admin@paganaffirming.com

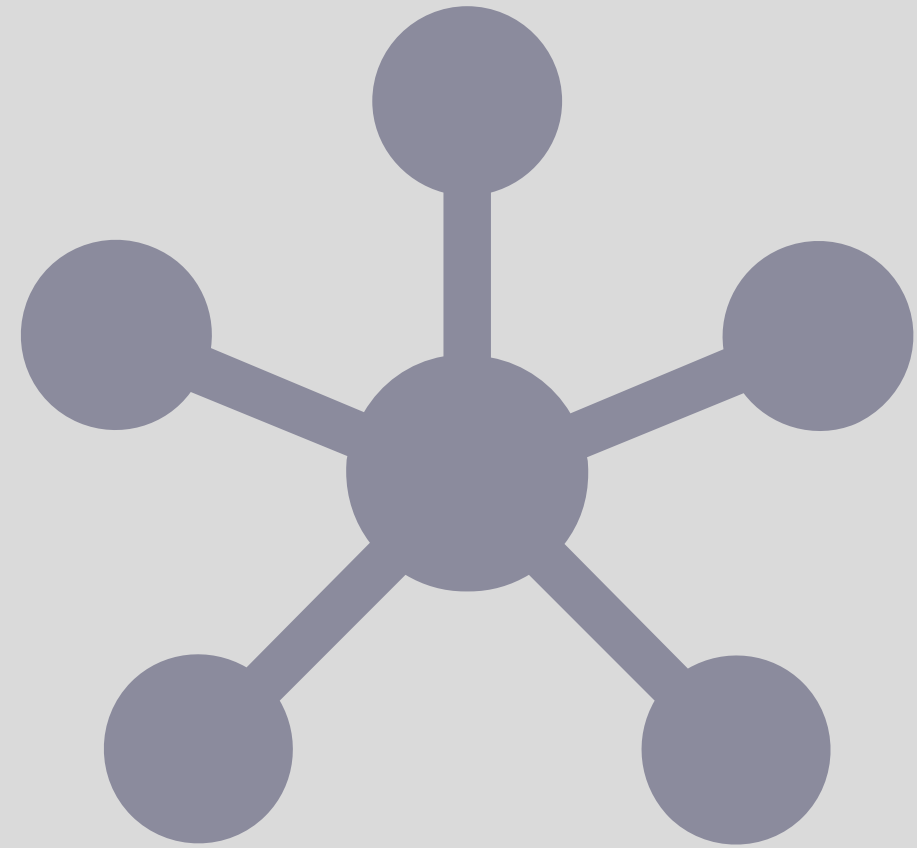


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INTEGRATION & CLOSING





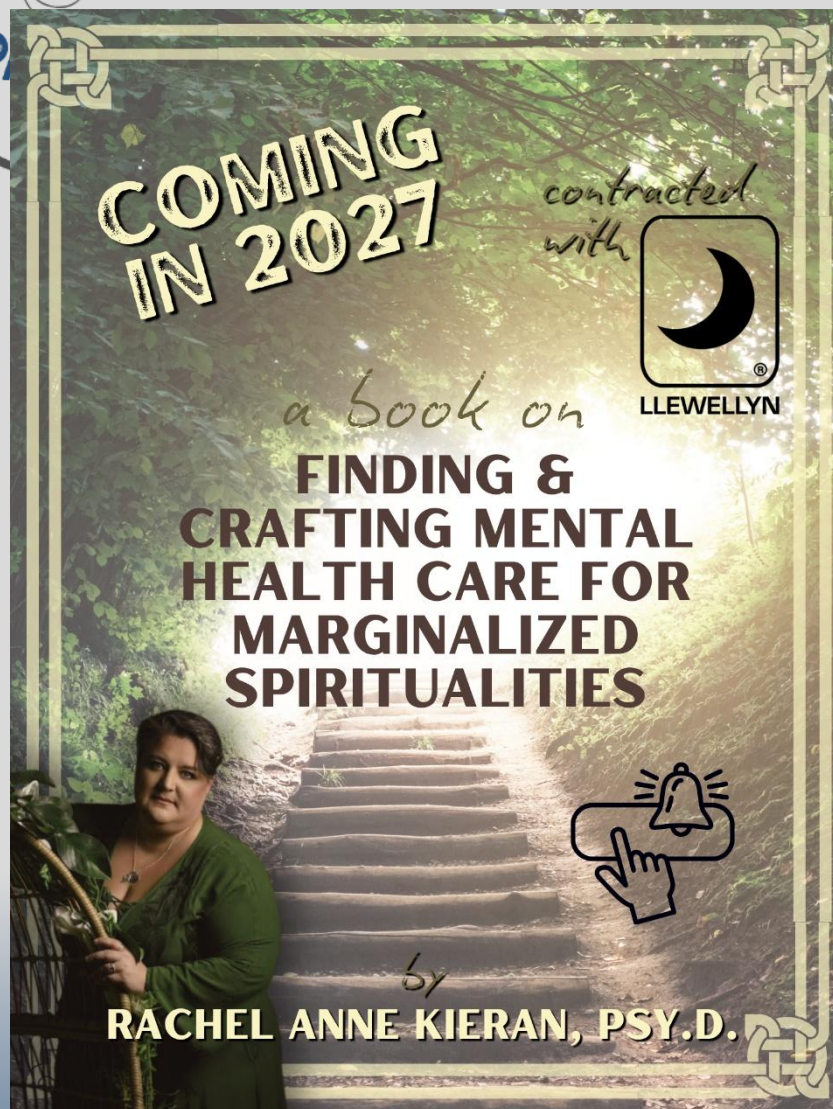
Integration Question



*What is the one ritual act you
are going to bring into your
therapy work before your next
session?
Name it. Even just to yourself.*



The Book



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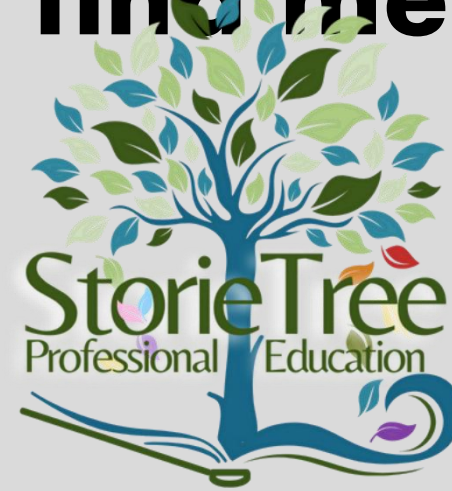
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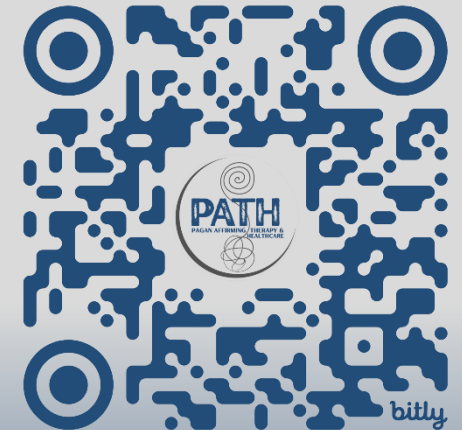
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Where you can find me

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My favorite ritual



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