

Ceremonies

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“All ceremonies symbolically destroy the world and create it again in a new shape. All ceremonies re-enact the beginning of the world. During the ceremony, time is said to cease flowing and sacred timeless time flows. Another way of expressing this is to say that a ceremony is ‘time out’ of our lives.”

(Clem Gorman, 1972, *The Book of Ceremony*)

Ceremonies are delightful ways of marking the important watershed moments in our lives. They provide a means to turn people on to an aspect of their potential that they may have been overlooking. A rite of passage highlights the moment when we pass from one state to another through a process which symbolically enacts a crisis or ordeal, so that the opening or change from old to new is carried out in a ceremonial fashion. We publicly and deliberately discard all the things associated with the earlier state from which we pass. As emotionally binding rituals, ceremonies create a positive approach to personal and social change, to which the community bears witness, acknowledging that we have indeed passed to a higher state. Ceremony always leads to higher ground.

Whatever the significant rite of passage is, *“only by communing together in each others’ physical presence, can ordinary people overcome alienation and rediscover what it means to communicate”* (CG, p. 7), in a way that has full meaning. Ceremony is the antidote for alienation. A secular form of ceremony has its roots in a view of life which assumes the primacy of spirit. Ceremonies are holistic in honouring the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of our nature as humans. Ceremony is a way of understanding and moving in harmony with spiritual forces as they manifest themselves through matter.

Ceremony is a doing thing, it only can be realized in action. The participational action of ceremony is what ties it all together – a space to transcend, to expand, for others to relate to, to play with in celebrating the transition taking place. The principles of ceremony are based on harmony and positivity. *“[H]armony is what provides the unifying tension in the group. Positivity is what provides its driving force and ensures success of whatever is undertaken without possibility of failure”* (CG, p. 38). This secular sacred space will raise the energy level and the faith level of everyone present, as we enact the spiritual dimension of our physical world. We are reshaping and recreating our world through a deliberate suspension of disbelief and creative play.

As we move into the timeless time, ceremonial time flows as normal clock time ceases. We leave behind what is temporal and particular and become one with the infinite and universal. These timeless interactions are the *“cosmic universe unfolding eternally in this timeless instant”* (CG, p. 26),

yet ceremony is part and parcel of a slowing of life. It is life distilled and concentrated.

People agree to move beyond the everyday sense, out of the mundane environment, into fantastic archetypal environments of which the ceremonial circle is an archetypal form. Ceremony provides a different way of seeing, of experiencing, of being in the world. Ceremonial days are watersheds in our evolution, times when we renew faith by seeing more clearly, while clearing away the cobwebs of time and survival.

Through ceremony we live and move in harmony with the earthly environment, to celebrate nature and all organic processes. Ceremony is a process of dissolution and reformation, common to all organisms. It provides a channel through which our compassion for the suffering of others, and relief for our own, is realised. Positive faith is the one indispensable element; however, the spontaneous, the random, and the unexpected are integral elements of ceremony. Ceremony seeks to involve and change peoples' experience, not their beliefs.

The time is right for ceremony to become a joyful reality in peoples' lives again. Ceremony is at first a demonstration, then a celebration, and the celebrant is the guide who facilitates the process. The guide acts as a center, a focus for the crystallization of group energies, and the center is the dimensionless point which generates all the energy which inspires and moves the group. Ceremony is a non-ego framework for change that expands our awareness holistically, as we embrace the present moment while understanding that ceremony pertains to that which is eternal. We become one with the cosmos and with each other since ceremony is an expression of love.

Natural Ceremonies is a holistic service designed to create private and public ceremonies that mark the many different rites of passage that we move through in life. We design ceremonies that celebrate the major events in the lives of people of all ages, for all occasions, throughout the year. We are happy to reshape any kind of ceremony to your needs. We act as consultants in collaboration with those who are participating in the event being planned. We create unusual events that are emotionally satisfying and community building moments. *Natural Ceremonies* provides a spiritually grounded experience that communicates in a symbolic way the personal meanings that are intrinsic to the event being celebrated. By creating ceremony we take notice of important events, and change the quality and course of our lives in a powerful and positive way.

(We are thankful for the seminal work of Clem Gorman, who wrote The Book of Ceremony back in 1972 (Bottisham, Cambridge, Whole Earth Tools, 3rd edition), from which the above quotes are taken.)