

Ten Simple Rituals for Connecting with your Ancestors



Andrea Hylen

<https://andreahtylen.com>

Ancestral Lineage Healing

Connecting with my ancestors was something that began when I was a child. Walking in the cemetery, collecting shells on the beach, and eating beech plum jelly with my grandmother. Fishing with my grandfather and listening to stories about my ancestors who had lived on the land. We never lived near family, but we stayed in touch through letter writing and visits during the summer and winter holidays.

In my 20's, I began to see the family dysfunction which led me to Al-Anon and working with a therapist who specialized in family constellation work. Along with genealogy, I spent decades unraveling my own codependency, trauma, and grief.

Fast forward to 2017, a year that began a series of incidents where I could see the effects of intergenerational trauma that had still not been healed by me going to Al-Anon, taking personal growth workshops, therapy, somatic workshops, and coaching programs. It hadn't been healed by several family members quitting drinking. The trauma and dysfunction were still there. It was finally in 2019, when a build-up of frustration and discouragement led me to study ancestral lineage healing to connect with ancient ancestors in spirit and ask for help.

I am now a certified ancestral lineage healing practitioner in the lineage of Ancestral Medicine, a community led by Daniel Foor. The ancestral lineage process focuses on lineage repair and relationship building with vibrantly well ancestors. This has amplified the blessings and helped my daughters begin to change old patterns of trauma.

My intention in sharing ten simple ritual ideas with you is to focus on different ways to amplify the blessings of your lineages with well ancestors in spirit. There is a video recording of how to set up ritual safety and protection first. Then turn your attention towards blessings and relationship building.

Connect with your Ancient Ancestors

Rituals are a way to deepen the connection with the unseen spirits of your ancestors and unravel old patterns (burdens) while bringing more of the blessings, gifts, and talents of your lineages to the living.

I focus on ancient ancestors because they had earth-honoring rituals where the dead were well celebrated and honored. Many of those traditions have been lost and the burdens on the lineages have increased over time.

Before doing any kind of ritual, set up ritual safety and protection.

- Begin with a practice of calling on a trusted guide, angel, deity, land spirit.
- Ask them to clear the energetic space around you.
- Ask them to set up a boundary for ritual practice.

In the video link below, I shared a simple practice of setting up a ritual space.

A Practice: Setting up Ritual Safety <https://youtu.be/V4ldVz4bOL0>

When you go into a meditative state and call on all your ancestors that is a lot of energy! It's like opening the door and inviting everyone into a party. The other piece is that by inviting everyone to the party, you are also opening a space for any spirit or unseen power to come into your space.

Once you have set up ritual safety, call out to your vibrantly, well ancestors.

Acknowledging your ancestors brings healing to the past, present and future.

ONE: Create an Ancestor Altar

Creating an altar for your ancestors is the first step in building a relationship. Begin with something simple and use this as a place to bring offerings, sit and share a cup of tea or coffee, sing songs, or sit in silence. This is one way to acknowledge your ancestors and focus attention.

Things to place on the altar:

- **Photos.** Only place photos of deceased family members. You can place family photos with living and deceased family in other parts of the house. Just not on the ancestor altar.
- **Symbols** that represent gifts and blessings you want to amplify. Items that are made of wood, metal, fabric, paper, fire, the elements, and art.
- **Crystals,** incense, candles, lanterns,
- Things you find in **nature.** Leaves, acorns, pinecones, flowers, herbs, stones, plants.
- **Bring offerings of food and drink.** (When you are finished with food and drink, you can place it outside and let nature consume it. Leave on the altar for a day, a week, or a month. Whatever feels right to you.)

These are ideas. You don't need to do all these things. Start out simple and when inspired, add something new as an offering and a gift to your ancestors.

As a digital nomad, I live a house free lifestyle and travel to different places. My ancestor altar is a small wooden box with a lid. I have small gemstones that represent each of my grandparent lines and small symbols and tokens that I have gifted to my ancestors. I also carry a small bag with additional spiritual symbols that have meaning to me and a small candle and incense. If possible, close the lid or cover the altar before going to bed at night.

If you have an ancestor altar, reflect on the way that you connect with your ancestors and see if you want to cleanse or update your altar.

Two: Make a List of Blessings

Make a list of blessings that you know about your ancestors. What talents, skills, and gifts have been passed down to the living? Separate the blessings by each lineage and notice where there is an overlap.

If you knew your parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents, think about things that they did for work or hobbies. Add that to the list.

If you didn't know them, write down your natural abilities. What talents, skills and gifts do you have? Even if this is something that you took courses to learn about. What have you been drawn to that feels like your purpose in life?

MM – Mother's Mothers lineage. (A long line of grandmothers)

MF – Mother's Fathers lineage. (A long line of grandfathers)

FF – Father's Fathers lineage. (A long line of grandfathers)

FM – Father's Mothers lineage. (A long line of grandmothers)

Blessings from my MF lineage.

1. Writers
2. Creative imagination. My grandfather's favorite book was Alice in Wonderland.
3. Curious
4. Adventurous
5. Deep love for my grandmother and his children and grandchildren.
6. Innovative
7. Environmentalist who loved the land and sea and protected it.
8. Built a house with my grandmother in 1930 using recycled materials.

Read the list of blessings out loud at the altar. Ask your ancestors to show you more or to help you understand how blessings were embedded in day-to-day activities. This can come in the form of dreams and synchronistic messages that cross your path.

Three: Practice Gratitude

Sit at the altar and thank your ancestors for your life and for keeping the lineage alive. Ask them to help you amplify the blessings.

Practicing gratitude can include:

- Singing a song.
- Reading a poem or a cartoon.
- Light a candle.
- Light incense.
- Sit by the altar with a cup of coffee or tea.
- Tell your ancestors what you are grateful for in your life.
- Tell them about what is happening in your life.
- Share a funny story.
- Ask for their advice.

If you feel distant from some of your living relatives or you did not have a relationship with people before they died, remember that the focus of gratitude is to reach out to ancient ancestors who are well in spirit.

You may receive insights and guidance during a gratitude practice. Messages from your ancestors could show up as symbols or words on a billboard or spoken through a person you know or even while watching a film. You will know the words and messages are for you because you will have a physical and emotional response to them. A feeling of perking up, paying attention or chills.

Four: Practice Forgiveness

Write a forgiveness prayer.

Take this to the altar.

Fill a dish or cup with water and place it on the altar.

Light a candle at the altar.

Read the prayer out loud to the grandmothers or grandfathers.

You may choose someone you knew, or knew of, or you can connect with well ancestors and ask them to receive the forgiveness.

When you are finished, empty the water.

The burdens are released down the drain or back into the earth.

Making a list of burdens on the line may help you to determine where to place your attention for forgiveness. This could be a monthly practice to keep peeling away layers of burdens that have affected you or other people in your family. It can help to unravel old limitations and patterns that are no longer needed to keep the lineage alive.

My grandfather shared so many amazing blessings with me and my children and he was also an alcoholic and a misogynist and racist. By acknowledging the burdens, I have forgiven him and released him from the burdens.

Forgive the ancestors and begin to see that blessings can become burdens to help the lineage survive. An alcoholic may have been a very sensitive person who used alcohol to function. Hard workers may have become workaholics. Blessings can get out of balance and become burdens. Forgiveness brings compassion to you and your lineage. Being a human is filled with challenges.

A forgiveness prayer example from Daniel Foor's book: *Ancestral Medicine*. Speak the prayer out loud to a person on a lineage or to the whole line. Ask the vibrantly, well ancestors to receive the forgiveness.

I (say your name) forgive you (say their names), for all the harm you have done to me, both real or imagined, known or unknown, intentional or unintentional, from this moment in time, to all moments in time, and I release you from all of these. (Repeat three times with feeling.)

Pause

Then repeat three times: I ask your forgiveness of me for all the harm that I have done to you, both real or imagined, known or unknown, intentional or unintentional, from this moment in time to all moments in time, and I ask for my release from all of these.

Say the Ho'oponopono Prayer:

This is an ancient Hawaiian prayer.

Imagine a person sitting across from you in a chair.

Place your hand over your heart.

Repeat the words slowly, gently, and softly.

As you repeat the words directed towards a person, also feel the forgiveness in your body.

I'm sorry.

Please forgive me.

I love you.

Thank you.

I'm sorry.

Please forgive me.

I love you.

Thank you.

I'm sorry.

Please forgive me.

I love you.

Thank you.

(Repeat for as long as you want.)

Five: Research the History

Research the history of your ancestors. If you know when they traveled to another county or country, learn about what was happening historically. Why did they leave?

If you do not know the history of your ancestors but know through DNA testing where your people are from, you can learn about some of the challenges and hardships during different times on the land where they resided. What did they endure?

Researching the history is a way of building compassion and understanding.

Be curious about what you have already been drawn to in the form of food, drink, and celebration.

Search on Youtube for ancient music of your ancestors. Search for drumming, songs or prayers spoken in the native language.

Listen to the languages of your lineage. You don't need to understand the language cognitively. Find some videos or audio recordings and listen to someone speaking in the native tongue. Let it wash over you. Feel it in your body.

Set up ritual space, then listen to the music and language of your ancestors at the altar.

Six: Set a Place at the Table

Set a place at the table with dishes and a chair for your well ancestors. It can be a symbol of welcoming them into your home. If you know the language they spoke, you could write the word WELCOME in their language and place it at the table.

One chair is enough because it is a symbol of welcoming. Put food on the plate and a beverage in the glass. When you are finished with the meal, take it outside and put the food under a tree or a bush. Pour the beverage out in the same area. Ask nature to consume the food and drink.

Placing food outside is also a way to feed other spirits and to set a boundary for them to stay outside. Feed them outside and keep the boundary around your home for vibrantly, well ancestors.

Imagine this ritual as a way of building a relationship with your ancestors that invites their wisdom, protection, and love into your life.

Seven: Make Oracle Cards

Oracle cards, tarot cards, and divination tools are a way to ask questions and receive insights from spirits in the unseen world. You can use cards and tools you buy or make your own.

There are so many amazing oracle cards now that you can order with artwork connected to your lineage. African, Celtic, and Nordic to name a few.

If you want to make your own oracle cards, find symbols that relate to your ancestry. This gives you the freedom to combine different lineages on the same cards. Symbols of elements and nature are also potent.

Decide how many cards you want to make. Twenty-four to correspond with runes or seventy-eight to emulate traditional decks of tarot.

Play with it and see what number comes to you.

Supplies: A pack of index cards, images and words cut out of magazines, colored pencils, and markers.

This is play. You can sit and make these in a day or weekend. You may decide to create one card at a time based on guidance from your ancestors. This could be a card that you place on the altar as you wait for more inspiration.

When you have a pack of cards, do a reading by asking your ancestors a question.

Tune in to your intuition by looking at the combination of symbols on the cards. What stands out to you? What does that symbol signify?

Eight: Dream Journal

Dream time: Invite your vibrantly, well ancestors to come to you during dream time. Keep a notebook beside your bed so you can easily roll over and record your dreams. This is something you can bring to them in meditation to ask more questions.

Ask them to help you remember details of the dream. Ask them what the symbols mean. Ask them if you are all the people or if your ancestors are being represented in you and the symbols.

Daydreaming: Go on walks with the intention of daydreaming. Ask your ancestors to be with you. Ask questions and listen for the answers. Write down details about nature that catches your eye. Write down insights and intuitive hits. Write down words and other symbols.

Recording your night dreams and daydreams is a way to acknowledge that you are listening and that you value the information. It is a way of inviting the wisdom of your ancestors into your life.

Nine: Meditate and Ask Questions

One of the easiest ways to connect with your ancient ancestors is to place an intention during your meditation time. Building the energy of connection with an altar and the other ritual practices will deepen the connection, too.

- Set up ritual safety.
- Sit in meditation.
- Call on your vibrantly well ancestors and ask them to be with you.
- Ask your ancestors specific questions and be open to the answers coming during meditation, sleep time or at random times in your day.
- Designate a place to record the answers and insights in a journal, notebook or a word document.

Question ideas:

- What can you tell me about the blessings, talents, and skills on this lineage?
- What can you tell me about the burdens?
- Please help me find a job. What is an action step I can take?
- What wisdom can you share with me about my relationship with my father (mother, sibling, child, friend, coworker)?
- How can I attract more (fill in the blank)?

Ten: Build a Relationship with Nature

One of the ways to amplify the blessings of your lineage is to build a relationship with nature and land spirits where you live. Whether you see nature as kin or ancestors or something else, the focus is to build a relationship and reflect on the experience.

A practice:

Choose something in nature that you can sit and interact with in some way, every day. See this as a primary relationship for the next week or month. This could be a tree, a bush, a flower, vegetable plant, or rock in your yard or a park. It could be a river, ocean, or animal or even a potted plant that is in your home. Trust that whatever you are guided to is perfect.

Size does not matter. Tune in, walk around your yard, park or home and be open and curious to where your attention goes. You may feel a connection today or it may be something you explore for a few days before deciding.

You can also do this when you travel.

Choose something that you can pause and be with for a few minutes each day. Greet the “chosen” one and say hello. If you are traveling, when you leave to go to the next location, speak to the element you have been engaging with. Share an appreciation, a gratitude and say goodbye. If a few things show up, see how they are connected. The primary intention is to have a focus with presence and attention.

Here is a simple example with a tree:

You may begin with a spoken hello and share your name or something else.

A simple introduction.

Share that you would like to get to know the tree.

Research the name of the tree.

What is the origin? What are some of the attributes?

You might ask if it is okay to take a picture or to touch the tree. (Trust your intuition. I usually move slow and gentle and trust that if I don't feel a no, then I will hug the tree, touch the bark or a leaf.)

A practice might include bringing your morning beverage and sitting with the tree for five minutes.

Sit silently or talk out loud.

Be present.

Although, I am encouraging you to choose a primary relationship, know that most of the nature around you will be excited to connect with you. Feel free to interact with everyone and everything you feel drawn to and then commit to a daily connection with your primary nature relationship.

Have fun!

Some questions to consider:

- What do you know about this nature already?
- What feelings surfaced about the idea of a primary relationship with something in nature?
- Is this connection also a connection with ancestors? What does your intuition tell you?

Bonus: Winter Season

Living in the Northern Hemisphere, I have wondered about how my ancestors celebrated during this time of year. In many countries around the world, there is a hustle and bustle of activity during the winter. It feels contradictory to what the elements of nature are showing us.

One way to reclaim a connection with your ancestors is to tune in to the cycles of nature and seasons. In the Northern Hemisphere, the winter solstice on December 21 is the darkest night of the year. This pdf of rituals is being released in January, a time of stillness and hibernation.

Use this stillness to think about your ancestors. Light a candle at the new moon or the full moon. Send them love and gratitude. Ask them questions about how they honored the darkest time of year and to show you what was different.

- What did our ancestors know that we have forgotten?
- What are you longing to reconnect with during this season of stillness and dark?
- Light a candle and listen.

Ancestral Lineage Healing Sessions

If you would like to explore ancestral lineage healing with lineage repair and building a relationship with your ancestors, I have a half price winter special that is on my website until February 29, 2024. <https://andreahtlen.com/winter-special-ancestrallineagehealing/>

If you have questions about ancestral lineage healing and want to learn more before signing up, here is a link for a 30-minute discovery session.

<https://calendly.com/ahylen/30min>