

Breathing with the Forest

This is a simple vision to help you connect with nature and trees from an inner sense. It is a more developed version of something I used to do as a child in the woodlands around where I lived.

Do this vision outside on the land, sat with a tree.

Seat yourself at the foot of a tree and lean against it. Close your eyes and be aware of the flame of life housed deep within you in your centre. As you focus on your inner flame, feel yourself becoming still and silent – the everyday noise in your head slowly fades away as you breathe steadily, and naturally, leaving you in a place of stillness, silence and peace. With each breath you take, keep a focus on your inner flame and the stillness within. Bathe in that stillness, withdraw from the intrusive thoughts and noise in your mind, and move deeper and deeper into stillness.

As you become still, be aware of the tree that you lean upon. Be aware of its size, its strength, its life force, and feel your own inner energy start to melt into the tree – allow your hard barriers to soften, so that your spirit and the spirit of the tree can mingle. Feel into the tree gently with your mind, hold the thought of stillness as your mind slowly washes into the energy of the tree, and in that stillness, be aware of the energy of the tree, how it feels and how it reacts to you. Be aware of any birds or sounds of nature around you as you melt your boundary and allow the tree to feel into you – feel yourself becoming a part of the energy of the nature/woodland around you. Be aware of how your energy can spread out into the woodland or landscape, coming into silent energetic communion with everything around you.

The deeper into the stillness you go, the more aware you become of the tree's life force and of the life force of everything around you. The rhythm of the tree is very different from your own and slowly you find yourself tuning into the tree's pulse. Your breathing slows and your consciousness starts to shift away from the human rhythm of life. You begin to tune deeper and deeper into the tree and the surrounding land. Your awareness of the outside world falls away as you join with the tree. All of your awareness of your modern life has fallen away and you sit in peace and stillness, breathing in the wind/air and breathing out peace and silence.

You breathe as the tree breathes, slowly and peacefully: your own body rhythm slows right down, and the rhythm of your spirit slows even more. You merge deeper into the tree, feeling its age, its time, how it moves much more slowly through time than you do. You withdraw even further from your everyday self and feel as if you are a part of the tree. You feel the brightness of the life force of the tree, you feel your roots pushing deeper and deeper into the earth, and your branches reaching up to the sky. You feel solid, silent, connected, and you feel all of the forest around you, connected through your roots: you feel what the tree feels, you and the tree are one.

The days come and go and you watch as the sun rises and falls. Leaves bud, push out and bathe in the sunlight; you experience the joy as your leaves turn to the sun, drinking in the early morning goodness. Roots deep within the earth anchor you and the forest around you moves and breathes as one with you. Each individual tree is felt by you, and yet they are all one being. As you breathe out, your breath passes through the forest and as you breathe in, the power of the air nourishes each tree. You are truly at one with the forest.

The power of the land beneath you strengthens you and the stars above you reach out their wisdom to you. With your head in the stars and your feet in the earth all life force passes through you as you become a bridge between the worlds. Humanity comes and goes, but the forest remains always.

Be aware of the stars above you and the underworld beneath you. Be aware of yourself as a human who can bridge power from one place of being to another. Be aware of yourself as the magician who serves everything that needs

service: deep in your stillness, ask the forest what it needs. Be silent. Allow the answer to come back as a feeling, not as words. When you sense the feeling, hold that feeling.

Take in a deep breath and focus on the feeling that the trees communicated to you. With the intention of bridging whatever is necessary and breathe out slowly with the intention that whatever is needed for the trees, for the forest. Feel yourself stretched between the stars and the underworld, and allow whatever needs to flow through from these places, whatever answers the need of the forest, to flow through you and out through your breath. Take in another deep breath and again breathe out whatever is necessary, and upon the third deep breath, as you breathe out in the act of bridging whatever is needful, finish the breath with a sound or word. Don't think about what that sound or word is, just let it flow through you and join with the air and wind around you: externalise that power as an utterance – *in the beginning was the Word*. Do this as many times as you feel you need to in order for the catalyst needed by the forest flows through you and reaches where it needs to go.

When you have finished, be still, be silent and be at one with the forest. Breathe with the forest, and be still.

Something calls out to you through the stillness and you become aware of yourself once again as a human. The forest slowly retreats from you and yet the tree is still strong within you. Spend time just allowing you and the forest to slowly separate, and be aware that as you separate, you and the forest are changed – remember that feeling within you of change, and of connection. Whenever you walk among the trees again, you will feel them, and they will feel you.

Slowly, the everyday sounds around you filter back into your mind: you become more aware of the sounds of the birds and creatures around you, and become more aware of your own heart rhythm, and of breathing in and out. Be aware of your connection and yet separateness with the trees, and be aware of being surrounded by a family of trees.

When you are ready, open your eyes. For a moment, turn and lay your hand flat on the tree. This tree is your brother or sister, your kin...you have joined through the seasons together and breathed as one. Come back here often and sit with the tree if you can. Join with the tree and leave offerings of food¹ for the plants and creatures that keep this tree strong. If the tree is near to where you live, don't be surprised if the spirit of the tree enters your dreams when it is in danger or is stressed: if the trees need help, the collective consciousness of trees can reach out to those who pay attention, and will ask for help, just as they do through their roots to their fellow trees within the forest.

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¹ Any food left by trees or anywhere in nature must be unprocessed and not a risk to anything. Never leave heavily processed foods, meats, or chocolate as they are potential poisons for the creatures of the land. Honey is always a safe option, as is bread.