How to Celebrate the Day of the Dead

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All Hallows Eve

In America, especially in the Latino countries, we celebrate the Day of the Dead or All Hallows Eve, commonly known as Halloween. This year, I'd like to invite you to throw a different type of party for your Halloween celebration.

I'd like to reveal how you can have a party with your Ancestors… your dead ancestors. Why should you do this? There are four very good reasons to celebrate the Day of the Dead.

1. To express appreciation
2. To heal any unfinished business
3. To repair Family Karma, and
4. To celebrate them and the love that unites you all

In the following pages I'll share with you how to prepare your celebration for the Day of the Dead. There are certain things that are essential and important.

This mostly refers to four things:

1. The spirit of love, joy and gratitude
2. Certain structural elements to guarantee the spiritual quality of the celebration
3. The order of events for natural progression
4. Certain offerings of love, beauty and celebration that will please the spirits

Everything else is optional and you can use your creativity.

If you have kids, you'll want to enjoy the Halloween costumes and trick-or-treating with them. You can prepare for your day of the Dead Celebration before and then start the ceremony after the kids' trick-or-treat, after putting them to bed; or you can include your kids if they are more open and won't be scared or overwhelmed.

You can do the celebration alone or with the company of trusted family or friends who understand the intention and will not get scared or skeptic. Do not invite anyone who is skeptical. Their closed attitude will block the communication with the spirits. This communication requires an open heart and mind. You must be receptive. If the Ego mind is protective, it will not allow you to receive the effluvia or *Presence* of the departed loved ones.

Fear not. You are calling on the spirit of your loved ones. There is nothing to fear. All is love.

Express Appreciation

As long as your loved one is present in your heart, they still walk the earth. As long as they are remembered with love, they still retain an energy chord to you, even though they are no longer the individual consciousness you knew as dad, mom, grandma or uncle. All Hallows Eve can be a sort of Thanksgiving for those who have left this plane.

To express appreciation, you throw a party for your Ancestors. You can do it alone or with other family members or friends. In this article I give you the basic knowledge to throw your Day of the Dead Party.

Altar for the Dead

The basic structure for the Day of the Dead Celebration is an altar for The Dead. You can use a table, platform or stairs. You can also place everything in the floor. This is not disrespectful. The Dead are traditionally connected to the Earth and love the ground.

You can place the altar in a corner, leaving space to dance and play music around it. If you can, place the altar close to the dinner table so that The Dead and the Living can share a meal.

In Mexico, the table is set on the patio or yard and an arch of intertwined branches is decked with flowers and wired to the table. Paper bags are filled with sand and candles placed in the center, carefully lit up, forming a path towards the table.

The Mexicans are the masters of celebrating the Day of the Dead! They make it a big event and many go to the cemetery to celebrate it. You can see the cemeteries decked with flowers, candles and food at this time of the day. The Mexicans also create beautiful motifs, art and symbols that are placed in the altar, especially skeletons, which are the central motif for this day.

In your altar for the Dead, you can also place their images or photos or other memorabilia that belonged to them or reminds you of them.

You also lay the flowers, food and other offerings and the other things that The Dead love and I describe below.

You can combine this celebration with the Halloween tradition of wearing costumes by creating a competition on *Calavera* Make-up.

The best make-up of a *Day of the Dead Skull* wins a prize. The best overall costume, including what the *calavera* wears, gets another price. This makes it fun and humorous, which is how you take fear and sadness out of the equation.

Make up by artist Delani B.

What The Dead Love

Here are some things that Spirits love and will attract them like honey attracts the bees.

- **A great dinner cooked with love for them.** It's the love and the memory, of course, what the spirits love. But figure it out: they can't enjoy the pleasure of eating anymore, so they want to get at least a sniff of their favorite food! You may make their favorite dishes or a traditional cultural dish. I usually make *arroz con gandules*, a Puerto Rican dish. In some traditions, the food that is assign for The Dead is spared the salt, as it is said to scared spirits away. I don't eat with salt, so I make one big cauldron for all and the live guests who want salt can add it later. You may want to ask for guidance and follow your intuition. More about the dinner below.

- **Their favorite drinks**. This can include coffee, rum or other alcoholic beverages, coke or other sodas and always a glass of fresh water. There's a reason why alcoholic beverages are called spirits. They have potent organic chemicals that can be "smelled" and almost "touched" by the spirit, so that they can feel your offering. And it's great to serve alcohol to Uncle Fred without having to worry about his alcoholism. Of course, if you are off alcohol you can skip this part. They won't mind because they show up for you.

- **Their favorite treats.** Make that cake that Auntie Laurel loved. Have chocolate chip cookies for mom and Flan for dad. You don't have to make large amounts and you can take turns pleasing one of them each year, if making too many dishes is stressful to you. Oh, yes! Have lots of candies, especially if there are children among the dead or for those who died before birth. Just add a bag to the ones you'll use for the treat-or-trickers.

- **And lots of flowers.** Spirits love flowers! Traditionally in Latin America you offer flowers of three colors: red for life, yellow for joy and white for spirit. In Mexico marigolds and sunflowers are offered. In Puerto Rico, pompoms are offered. Irises are also a traditional flower for the dead.

- **Music:** Spirits love music, especially uplifting and harmonious music. (More about this below.)

- **Incense:** Spirits "drink" incense. It seems that smell is the one sense that it somehow retained, though it's more like osmosis. They love fragrant smells that are organic, especially essential oils, flowers and incense that are spiritually uplifting, such as frankincense, myrrh, sandalwood, lavender and patchouli. They may also feel attracted to the fragrance of their favorite perfume or cologne.

- **Empty space, harmony, cleanliness and beauty.** Spirits love empty spaces. In the Tibetan Shambala tradition, it is said that the Dralas, the Spirit of the Place, will dance around an object if you leave space around it. Harmony is not only present in music. It is an emotion and a vibrational frequency. A harmonious setting generates the vibration of harmony.

Beauty, cleanliness, order and harmony will help you set the stage for a great party for The Dead. Avoid chaos, filth, clutter and disorder as this is said to attract similar energies. (See more on this below.)

Though, to be honest, I've thrown a party for my Ancestors in the middle of moving and at times where I didn't have the time or energy to do a big cleaning. In those occasions, I simply did the best I can. I placed bright-colored sarongs over the boxes and tidy up some clutter so they're would be empty space.

This is a party, so avoid stress and focus on joy. After all, they are family, so you can relax a bit if your setting is not perfect. Love is the most important setting. Joy is the essential atmosphere.

The summoning

Dinner, however, is the last part of the celebration. Before you serve the food, the party starts by you lighting a candle and calling their names. Make a list of all the departed family and friends, so you don't forget. You may want to contact the elders to get the names of those who you did not know.

Once you call their names, you pray or talk to them. Here are some good things to express:

- Gratitude to each of the ones you knew
- Wish them spiritual evolution in whatever path they are now.
- Pray for their elevation and detachment from their previous life, so that they can move on.

And here's one rule: **No crying.**

When you are praying for or talking with the dead, do it in the spirit of love, gratitude and celebration. No crying. If you cannot hold the tears, excuse yourself and go cry. Then come back and continue the conversation. You are crying for two things:

- For yourself, because you don't have the physical comfort of that person's presence, and
- For the **old form and personality** of the spirit, which she or he has now left or is trying to leave.

By crying for her old form, you do not help her evolve and detach from the past. It's as if a loved one had gotten married or found the job of their dream somewhat far from you and you started crying in their celebration party. That's not going to help them in their advance.

Remember that emotions are powerful electromagnetic waves that attract same frequency forces. If you allow yourself to get depressed, mournful and fall into fear-based constrictive emotions, you will scare the evolved spirits away and attract the same fear-based frequencies. Stay in the love frequency!

This is an opportunity to connect with the *Essence* of those you loved and have gone from the physical plane, to feel their evergreen *Presence* in your life. Prepare your mindset towards this goal, and the Day of the Dead will become one of your favorite celebrations!

The Four Levels of Spirit Guests

It's always a good idea to know something about your guests before throwing a party. The most important thing to know is the four levels of Spirits that may show up.

- Evolving Spirits
- Spirits In transition
- Spirits in the In-Between
- Derelict or Backward Spirits

Most of The Dead have transcended the limitations in which they were trapped during life. Death is a radical transformation. You leave the *Tiny Self* you called "me" as you take off a garment. You go through a vibrational cleansing that returns you home to Spirit.

Most of your Dead Ancestors have gained perspective and are eager and able to make peace, help in your healing and help repair their own karma. This will allow them to do a better job in whatever their next "assignment" is ~whether in this earth plane or in another plane.

So 80% of your Spirit Guests are ready to rock!

There are exceptions, of course.

- The newly deceased may still be **in transition.** Pray for their ascension.
- Those who were too attached to their habits, addictions and obsessions, may be trapped in the **in-between** because they cannot let go so they can grow. Pray for their evolution.
- And a tiny fragment of *The Dead,* including party-crashers, may come to do mischief and speak lies. These are the spirits that remain **derelicts**. **Pronounce your party out of bounds for these souls.**

Start by setting boundaries

For this reason, it is a tradition to start the Day of the Dead celebrations with prayers for the ascension of the newly departed, the evolution of those who are still attached, and by calling your *Protectors* or *Guardian Angels* to keep away the derelict spirits. Be strong and clear that they are not welcome here, but from a place of love and light, sending a prayer for those who want to ascend. Hatred and fear will attract them, so don't go there.

Healing Unfinished Business

If you left things unsaid, here's the moment to say them.

If you had a fight the last time you saw your dead brother, here's the time to make amends.

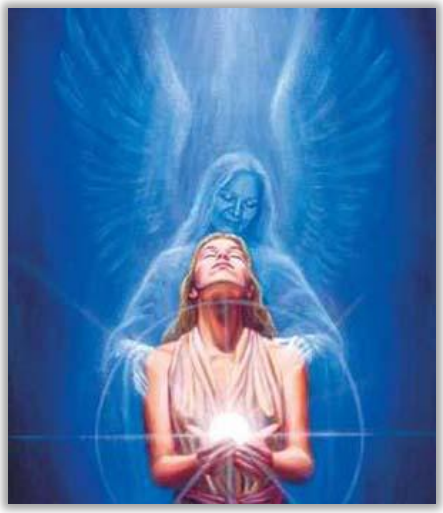
If you had a fall-out, could not forgive them for something they did to you, or held resentment, here's the time to let go and find harmony.

If you are sorry about the way you did not listen, did not say "I love you," did not have patience, judged them harshly, were not there for them… now is the time to be there for them and say the four most healing and transformative things in life.

"I'm sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you."

The Hawaiian Huna priests teach that these four statements with their corresponding emotions and frequency can heal and transform anything.

But how do you listen?



I recommend that you get into the habit of *Presencing*. This is the name I give to the act of listening with your entire body and *Energy Body.* Imagine that you have antennae all over your skin (which you do; they are called hairs.) Listen with them and beyond them.

Other simple postures that will help to be more receptive to the spirits are:

- Open your heart chakra and fill your heart with love, gratitude and joy. This expands your heart energy field and allows you to become more receptive to subtle energies.
- Close your eyes and bring them a bit inwards, to meet at your third eye. This clears the ego mind and connects it to the psychic mind.
- Rest your hands in a relax way on top of your lap, palms up. Listen through the palm of your hands and allow it to travel to your heart.

You will soon recognize the *Imprint* of each of your most closely known Ancestors. For example, my father shows up hugging me and I feel his hug on my shoulders. My mom shows up kissing me in the cheek and whispers in my right ear. My grandma shows up with an almost audible clap, her usual, "OK, let's do what needs to be done!"

Feel their *Presence*, because that is the one thing that does not change when you die. Your *Presence* is the expression of your *Essence*.

Whatever you do, don't push. Don't try hard. The *Internal Action* is to open your mind and heart and to listen with your heart. If you push, you are using your Ego mind, which cannot hear the subtle vibration of the spirits' whispers. Your Ego mind will make up things that are familiar and close you off to evolution, which involves new perspectives.

Repairing Family Karma

There's a reason that you were all born in this family. Each family brings gifts, as well as wounds and challenges to each of their members. Both the strengths and the limitations are transmitted from one generation to the other.

As each individual heals, they not only transform the patterns they inherited; they transform the bloodline, so that the next generations may not carry the wounds that you healed.

There's a socialization component in this mystery, of course; as you heal a limited belief it is now less real for the young ones who see you debunking it. There's a genetic component too, though we now know that genes respond to the environment and can be transformed, overriding old patterns.

But there is a spiritual, energy component in the *Karmic Wounds* that is as yet mysterious to me. The best way I can explain it is that you were born into this bloodline to experience certain human wounds exactly in the places where your spirit is strong. By experiencing these wounds, you learn compassion and experience your darkness and human vulnerability. When you have the courage to dive into the wound, cleanse it and find your strength, then you help your entire bloodline to cleanse that energy pattern in the DNA, and you contribute to the healing of humanity.

There are limitations, wounds and negative patterns of behavior that have been passed on to you through many generations. You may not have known or even heard about your great-great-grandmother who burned her writings. But here you are, many generations later, afraid of publishing your book and no matter how hard you try, it is not finished or cannot be published.

If you have such a *Karmic Knot*, an obstacle you've been wrestling for years and that seems to tighten each time you try to free yourself from it; then this is the time to bring it into the surface, asking for your Ancestors to help you release it for yourself, the bloodline and humanity.

In All Hallows Eve there is a great opportunity to ask and listen to find the connection between the limitations you are struggling with and your dead Ancestors. Ask questions and listen deeply in breath. If

you do not get a message, you may get it during dreams. The Ancestors often communicate with us in our dreams, when our Ego mind is at rest and we are able to leave the physical body and to understand with our Soul and deepest *Psychic Intelligence*.

If you have conquered an inherited limitation, offer it to your Ancestors as a gift of karmic healing. If you have healed a wound that a specific family member passed on to you, offer it to them as karmic healing. One of the reasons the dead communicate to us in dreams, through revelations and insights and in these occasions is to repair the damage they might have done in passing on limiting beliefs or acting in ways that were hurtful to you.

After you've prayed, talked and listened, and make sure that the energy is clear and there has been healing, then comes the celebration.

Celebrate!

Many Day of The Dead events involved playing lively, harmonious music, especially if it's live and if you are doing it or joining in it. You can start the entire session with music. Spirits love music. The vibration of music is transmitted directly to the *Energy Body* and it is healing and harmonizing (except for violent rock and other harsh metal sounds that have the opposite effect).

A pause is then made during the praying, healing and conversation.

Now you can continue the music full on. Play. Sing. Dance. Laugh. Joy is the ecstatic vibration of the spirit that joins us in whatever dimension we are.

Serve the dinner for The Dead in beautiful china. Some people cook a big cauldron of food to feed their entire bloodline. But the food is mostly a loving gesture, so don't stress out. You can serve a small portion. (They don't actually eat it, you know.) *LOL*

After you serve the dinner for The Dead, then serve the dinner for yourself and your live guests, and have a blast.

We are all made of pure energy, and that's our true self. We are all here, dressed in flesh and bones, but for a while. Life as we know it is a school, a playground and a passage. The Day of the Dead reminds us of this and helps us transcend our limitations to touch our true, spiritual nature, getting clear on what's truly essential in our life, what connects us and what evolves us.

Happy Day of the Dead!

About Maria Mar

Maria Mar is a sacred storyteller that tells stories to help you change YOUR story and create your Dreams in your life NOW. A writer, shaman and spiritual teacher, Maria is the author of dozens of books in fiction, personal growth and spirituality, women's empowerment, creativity, life-purpose and poetry. Maria creates inspirational fantasy stories that leap out of the page to guide you in your life journey. Known as the Dream Alchemist, she takes you in LIVE shamanic journeys for on-the-spot transformation that taps into your brightest potential, transmute your problems into possibilities, brings up your greatness and helps you express your unique gifts to make a BIG difference in the world.

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