INSTITUTE OF ESOTERIC PSYCHOLOGY

SELF-DISCOVERY FOR WELLNESS

ECOPSYCHOLOGY AND CONNECTING WITH NATURE

SDFW VIDEO #6

From ancient and indigenous religions to the current craze for forest bathing, humans have an innate predilection for connecting with the natural world. Even if you are not someone who perceives the possibility of sentience in trees and rocks and rivers, you can find mental and physical health benefits in spending time in nature. Recognition of the power of the natural world to soothe, heal and inspire us is not new in Psychology. There is an entire area of Psychology called Ecopsychology that incorporates spending time in nature as a vital part of psychotherapy. Being in Nature changes us. It changes our perspective through brilliant scenery, its power, instilling a sense of peace and connection to the Earth. These are things that traditional societies – including our own ancestors – understood and they incorporated awareness of the sacred aspects of Nature into their worldview and everyday lives. As hunter –gatherers, and later as sedentary agrarian societies, they were dependent on the Earth and the Heavens for their survival. Animals that were hunted to feed the tribe became sacred, and our ancestors painted their images on the walls of caves. The Earth and her cycles became increasingly sacred as societies changed from hunter-gathering tribes to farming and the domestication of animals and plants for sustaining human life.

Although the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches incorporated the Earth-centered beliefs of pagan Europe into their own calendar of festivals, the Reformation demystified Nature in the 17th Century. Urbanization and industrialization in the 18th and 19th Centuries further separated people from the land and nature, and our current techno-centered societies have taken the earth and nature completely out of the equation to the detriment of humanity's collective mental health and possibly even its survival. European colonialism in the 19th and 20th centuries planted Western culture and worldview onto subjugated populations. It was subsequently forced onto native populations through military action, economic and institutional sanctions and legal discrimination against those who continued to openly practice and embrace the pre-colonial traditional ways. Now – through ecopsychology and the increasing awareness that separation from nature is not a healthy or sustainable practice – more and more Westerners are going back to the earth for healing, connection to the sacred, re-discovering their place in the cosmos, and seeking out the wisdom of traditional societies and practices.

©2021 Institute Esoteric Psychology | https://www.institute-ep.com

All of the materials included in this course are © Karel James Bouse, Ph.D. and The Institute of Esoteric Psychology. None of the contents of this course – video, audio or print – are to be used without the permission of Dr. Bouse.

Who are some of the voices of the Ecopsychology and Nature movements?

- Gregory Bateson
- Rupert Sheldrake
- J. E. Lovelock
- Thomas Berry

How can I begin to reconnect with nature?

- Get outside in a natural setting. Sit quietly. Observe everything around you. Journal your observations. Use expressive arts to describe your experience. Be aware of what shows up in your dreams afterward.
- A simple exercise is to simply kneel down on the ground with the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet touching the earth. Close your eyes and breathe. What physical sensations do you notice? What mental pictures come to mind as you touch the earth?
- Acclimate yourself to the four directions and have a sense of due east, west, north and south.
- Greet the day by greeting the sun and thanking it for its light and warmth. Mark its transit through the arc of the sky from east to west every day. Note how the light changes as the sun passes through the points of the solstices and equinoxes.
- Become aware of the moon and her phases. Check in with your own body as the moon waxes and wanes. Do you notice a connection? (Most women do.) Thank the moon for her light and her changes. Blow her a kiss – it will make you laugh but feel very warm and satisfied on a cellular level.
- Familiarize yourself with the night sky and major constellations – the Big Dipper, Orion. Begin to learn how to pick out the 12 constellations marking the elliptic that constitute the so-called zodiac. Once you have those constellations mapped out, you can track the movement of the planets visible to the naked eye (Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) just like the ancients did. If you have a clear sky without too much refraction from city lights, and a good set of binoculars you can observe the planets, stars and nebulae with

All of the materials included in this course are © Karel James Bouse, Ph.D. and The Institute of Esoteric Psychology. None of the contents of this course – video, audio or print – are to be used without the permission of Dr. Bouse.

breathtaking clarity and detail. The star cluster of The Pleiades in the constellation of Taurus, the nebulae within the odd teapot shape of Sagittarius, the brilliant stars of Antares and Regal – the hearts of the scorpion and the lion respectively – are all treats you will never forget.

- Become cognizant of the seasons, their progression and the amazing changes they bring to the natural world – and to humans as well. Can you feel the burgeoning of life quickening about the time of the Vernal Equinox (March 20 - 22), the desire to draw in at the Winter Solstice (December 20 – 22), the overwhelming power of growth and light at the Summer Solstice (June 20-22) and the re-vitalization of life at the Autumnal Equinox (September 20 -22) as the days shorten and the heat and light of the sun is diminished? What changes do you see in the world around you – the trees, the animals, and the weather?

- Observe the forest. Were you aware that all changes begin on the floor of the forest and work their way up and out? Night begins along the forest floor and rises. The seasons make their progressions known with changes to the forest floor and smaller plants and bushes weeks before the big trees begin to leaf or color. Observe the animals and birds. Animals change their coats and their habits with the changes of the seasons. Many birds are migratory so that you can observe different avian species at various points in time throughout the year. You can observe the different habits such as mating, and nesting of birds and animals who are more or less permanent residents of your area. Listen for the mating hoot of the female Great Horned Owl during deep January, watch the mating rituals of the squirrels and deer, look for the first appearance of new rabbits, and the mating cries of the red-tailed hawks and other raptors. Observe, be patient, and you will be rewarded beyond your wildest dreams as you realize that you too are part of this dance of Nature, rather than a separate and alien entity.

- And always, always record, draw, write, dance, dream, sing. Begin to weave your own threads into the web of life.

Fostering a strong connection to the natural world is one of the most important and helpful things you can ever do for yourself. If you can allow yourself to connect to the Earth and Nature you will see yourself in a new perspective as yourself – not what you can do, or your accomplishments and failures in the human world. Those are all externals. There is a reason why traditional societies sent their young people out into the wilderness to seek their vision – the path of their lives and their true identity. There are important messages and wisdom in nature once we

All of the materials included in this course are © Karel James Bouse, Ph.D. and The Institute of Esoteric Psychology. None of the contents of this course – video, audio or print – are to be used without the permission of Dr. Bouse.

learn to see, to listen, and to understand that once we ask the question, then everything that we encounter is part of the answer.

©2021 Institute Esoteric Psychology | https://www.institute-ep.com

All of the materials included in this course are © Karel James Bouse, Ph.D. and The Institute of Esoteric Psychology. None of the contents of this course – video, audio or print – are to be used without the permission of Dr. Bouse.