

## Welcome

I like to think about what it must have been like to be a human, who was so in touch with the natural world, that you knew, you felt and noticed that it was the shortest day of the year and the longest night. And what it was like to be part of a community that worked creatively to mark it some way, as the Pueblo people did by carving spirals into the canyon rock so that they could track the sun's movement...

or like the ancient Mayans who built a huge stone monument in which the sun makes a serpent-like pattern...

The ancient people of Ireland who built a huge mound of dirt and surrounded it with stones.

For five days around the **Winter Solstice**, a beam of sunlight illuminates a small room inside the mound for 17 minutes at dawn.

And I wonder why we don't build these kinds of monuments anymore.

So here we are at the shortest day and longest night of the year, the darkest point of the year.

And if there is no separation, then that same thing is happening inside of us right now. A light is waiting to be lit in the darkness. And that light is a wonderful and beautiful promise that the sun makes to us. And in preparation, we rest and reflect. We dream. And set intentions. And then we find unique ways to celebrate the new course of light. The sun returns each day a little longer and stronger.

## Deep Time Meditation

### **Opening:**

*This practice is to reconnect us with Deep Time, our ancestors as the long lineage of life on this planet.*

*We are going on an inner journey together. Close your eyes or lower your gaze so we can go inward into our imaginations. I will lead us through this very slowly so that we can really feel into what our imaginations bring forward. At first, you may relate to this deep time story in a linear way, but remember the spiral nature of everything, including time, and let your consciousness bounce around naturally. Let the idea of YOU expand.*

*Take a few breaths and settle into the place in your body that feels most grounded. Bring awareness to your body. Right now, you are the Earth aware of itself.*

### **Ring Bell**

### **Guided Meditation:**

Through time long, long, ago, you are born as the tiniest creature, microscopic, a Cyanobacteria. You rejoice in making your own food using water and sunlight.

Something revolutionary happens when you begin living inside other microbes, and in your harmony, you develop more abilities. Cooperating clusters of cells create Great Ancestor Sponge. Miles beneath the surface of the ocean, in her bluest depths, you have tiny pores in your skin that draw the water in, filtering nourishment. Water is your life. You set out and

build the first reefs on earth. Then your body grows Worm-like and you begin to excavate the ocean floor. Along with your new burrowing lifestyle comes a more stout form of protection - a shell and spines. Over time, your back becomes rigid, and a spine allows you to swim and explore the vast oceans. Like Ancestor Fish, swim with bones in fleshy fins. As you slowly emerge from the salty water onto the rich soil of the earth, inside your drier body, small buds swell into lungs, you breathe oxygen from the air, and grow limbs and scales specialized for sun protection.

Looking up, meteors collide with Earth and volcanic eruptions release a cloud of ash that blocks out the rays of the sun. Walk with Woolly Mammoth, that emerges from the shadows with 10 foot long tusks, strong and resilient. With the glass-like wings of Dragonfly, hover and dart about, moving each of your four wings independently. Soar with Ancestor Bird that takes flight, floating above lush mountains. The air is very warm and moist. Feel your furry little body, about the size of a mouse, nuzzled against the soft earth, hiding in safety from enormous animals. You scuttle around searching for insects to nibble on. The plates of the earth slowly move beneath your tiny feet, splitting into many different land masses, separating you from your kin. But still your growth through time takes place together. An intricate web of relationships emerges, as beings move and migrate, forming the foundation for ecosystems, communities of life dependent on each other and their environments. Earth cycles in and out of glaciation, becoming a huge snowball covered with sheets of ice followed by bursts of warmth that thaw the frozen water and send it back across the land, filling valleys and carving out new patterns in the landscape.

Be still. You now have threads that anchor you near a crevice in the warming earth. Sit with Ancestor Moss as you absorb minerals from the rocks to grow and flourish, sending out spores so light to perfectly travel on the wind and through the waters. Your threads transform over time into roots that stretch deep into the earth, securing your stature and yet you remain flexible and sway in the breeze. You grow, regardless of hardships. A miraculous underground partnership with Fungi allows you to live almost anywhere, cover more ground and care for your offspring. The commitment to being rooted has made you creative about ways to harness energy. Settle into stillness with the Plant Ancestors and thrive on a network of sharing. Remember how it feels to truly belong to a place.

Extend your branches in all directions. Sometimes you grow so tall that it is like another world up in your canopy. You share life with many beings that can only live in your care. When you were a mouse-like creature, you climbed up into the canopy in search of insects. Over a very long period of time you develop a larger body, longer hair, and arms to swing through the jungle.

Curious of what is below, you climb down to the solid earth and discover the abundance there. Roam with Ancestor Ape through deserts, mountains, and deep forests. In time, a tribe sets out into the unknown, without the protection of fur, fangs or claws; to explore the world... but you have each other, friends and family, inventive minds and agile hands.

You learn to hunt animals and heal yourself with plants. It is clear that your survival is connected with the life forms around you. Sparks of creativity ignite in your imagination,

and you sing, dance, tell stories, build shelters, and make art, weaving joy and pleasure through the community.

Circle up in ceremony, with the human Ancestors, take a seat on the earth beside them, as they enact a simple heartfelt ritual of knowing that there is no separation, that what we do to the earth we do to ourselves. They express gratitude and honor the earth with song, dance, chant, prayer, invocations, stories, offerings. Imagine sitting in ceremony with these first wild humans...



We journey with these ancestors through time, knowing that they celebrated good fortune, endured grief and survived through wars and pandemics, each one finding ways to adapt and care for each other.

What were the qualities, the gifts, that helped our Ancestors that we may bring forward, in our hearts, now?




***With eyes still gently closed, you're going to make the transition back slowly, coming back into your own life, your body and spirit.***

And consider, How much of you are you?

You are made up of elements of the earth that have been recycled for over 4.5 billion years.

All beings brought forth from the Earth live today in your cellular memory.

Notice, your hands resting in your lap, holding all the gifts of our oldest Ancestor, the Earth... 

*Imagine* in front of you, children, they belong to the earth, then imagine in front of them the grandchildren, and their grandchildren. Visualize all the gifts of the Ancestors pouring out of your hands into the future generations who will carry them forward.

What gifts do you offer? Maybe they are instincts that you have always had that have served you well, maybe they are qualities that you have worked towards your whole life, what do you bring forth with your whole body, mind and spirit today?

***And now, we will gently return and slowly open our eyes, come back into the room, back to each other. Take a few deep breaths.***

### **Closing:**

This experience with Deep Time, this exploration of where we are and who we are, helps us to feel our deeply connected and boundless nature. Our present moment will always be more potent than we can know.

Let's put our hands together and bow to the ancestors.  
Bow to the future generations.  
Bow to each other.

We are Earth.

***Ring bell to end***

***Bow***

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:**

- Begin with "I am earth" and see what comes forward.
- Describe how that journey felt for you. Was there anything that surprised you?
- What gifts do you offer? Talk about ancestors.
- Explore your relationship with the earth, be honest about the complicated nature of cultural conditioning and how we work with that in light of our spiritual practice and Joanna's teachings.

***Light Incense and Central Candle***

**OUTSIDE GROUNDING TO THE EARTH CIRCLE**

We went on a journey in our imaginations and now that our feet are nestled on the earth, we are going to ground the truth of who we are into our bodies a little more.

Take one hand and press into your wrist, feel the pulse ... the ability to pump fluids around is thanks to ancestor sponge.

And feel your heart beating... the big muscle of your heart is thanks to ocean invertebrate ancestors like the Tunicate.

Place a hand on the back of your neck and notice the ingenious design of your spine. It is solid enough to protect your spinal cord, yet flexible enough for you to move. This spine is thanks to ancestor fish.

Move your hands up to your head and feel the hard skull which protects your amazing reptilian brain... that came from your ancestor who crawled onto dry land.

What a wonder it is that we have come to a time where this brain, this neurological contraption, is able to center itself in the middle of these expansive galaxies and start measuring and trying to understand the whole thing.

Notice your intelligence, resilience and creativity, your determination for growth and change, your commitment to awareness of yourself and others as the key to harmony in this web of life so intricately woven beyond your understanding. All you have is just the deep knowing and love that arises in each heart beat and breath, when you listen for it.

And finally, let's feel our feet on the earth. Sense through your feet, the gravity holding you like a hug. There is soooo much beneath you... worms, centipedes, beetles, moth and butterfly pupa, fungi, algae, and a million other life forms, and they are thriving in the remains of all beings that have returned to the earth. The temperature at the inner core, made of solid and liquid rock, about 4,000 miles down -- is about the same as the Surface of the Sun. We are held between two intense sources of heat and light. No matter how dark life gets, if you need a light, remember this. And on this special cosmic event, the Winter Solstice, we celebrate and give thanks for all that supports us.

***Each person gets an apple candle, walks to the Center Candle and lights their candle***

During this next sun cycle, may each day forward that is blessed with more light also bring more connection and more courage and love to heal our relationship with the earth.

And in a moment, we are going to make a wish and blow out our candle, but let's be very patient and watch the smoke ascend... it connects the physical plane to the realm of the spirit. We are also connecting with thousands of years of prayer and ceremony, on this day of the Winter Solstice, and whenever we gather in this way. When we make our wish, it will be carried up into the vast sky.

Everyone can do this silently, in their own time, in deep time...



***Period of silence***

***Chant to close***

***Bow***

## REFERENCES:

Special thanks to Sylvia Di Blasio, a contributor to the Work that Reconnects, and her work “Harvesting the Evolutionary Gifts of All Our Ancestors,” adapted by Constance Washburn  
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