

***Remember Why You are Here*** with Asia Suler

Episode 69 Transcript

“The Medicine of Trees”

(00:00):

Trees have been at the center of our spiritual practice as land-based people since time immemorial. Trees are our elders. They are our ancients. They're often the source point for our rituals. So much magic can be rediscovered just by connecting to the tree realm. Hello and welcome back to Remember Why You're Here, a podcast for seekers and sensitives where you can relax, receive, reconnect to yourself and remember the most important thing of all why you're here. I'm Asia Suler, author, earth intuitive teacher. And in this episode today, I wanted to respond to a voice message that I got over on my website at [asiasuler.com/remember](http://asiasuler.com/remember). And in the voice message I was asked to speak specifically to the medicine of trees to do an episode about the medicine of trees. So that is what we're doing here today. And I wanted to share as well a recording that I made several years ago about three tree rituals for a rich life.

(01:14):

These are three rituals that I do with the trees and that continue to just bring so much depth and magic into my life, even though I've been practicing them for many years now. So we're going to get into that recording in a little bit, but first I just wanted to talk some about the magic of trees. So I've been really kind of having a psychedelic experience lately with the trees. We are in the part of the wheel of the year right now where the trees all have their leaves, their big, beautiful, floppy, tender, green leaves. And it really is a bit of a psychedelic experience to go from having the mountains here be so open to the view of just the blue mountains and the curves of the mountains everywhere you look to suddenly being in this cocoon of green upon green, upon green. And I find myself often just laying on my back or even looking out the window of my car at the bodies of the trees and thinking, what a wonder.

(02:14):

What a wonder that our earth decided to evolve these beings, that trees exist at all. I just think that they are so interesting and magnificent. I often find my brain kind of wandering back to the time when there were these primeval forests that covered so much of the world. And I think a lot of our memories, our deep human memories, our ancestral memories are still connected to those times. I think about, or I look at pictures of ancient forests and it stirs something really deep in me to see these very old thousand year old or even older trees, these bodies of trees that are more like landscapes unto themselves. And so there's this love in which the medicine of trees really is the medicine of humanity, even though we haven't always lived with trees that we've lived in areas of the world and continue to live in areas of the world where there necessarily are not trees, but trees themselves are a huge part of the earth, a huge part of the unique environment here on this planet.

(03:27):

So trees and the true first true forests appeared about 385 million years ago. And what's really interesting to me about these early, early trees is that they were pretty different than our modern trees that we think of. A lot of them were more like giant ferns, giant horsetails, things that we wouldn't necessarily call trees now. Some other interesting tree facts is that there was a time

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before wood could rot. So when trees first evolved, lignin, the tough material that makes wood really rigid, nothing on our earth knew how to decompose it yet. So for millions of years, these dead trees just piled up faster than they could decay. And these ancient forests are what became coal beds and fossil fuels. So in a very literal sense, a lot of industrial civilization runs on these ancient prehistoric trees. So they really are like at the bedrock and in the deepest, most hidden places of our world, including our current society.

(04:31):

We know, of course, that trees help create the atmosphere that we breathe. So we very literally are breathing with the trees and trees as we know of now, they're diverse in their form. So there's different kinds of trees. We have conifers, we have tree ferns, we have palms, we have flowering trees. And what I love about trees is what really is defining a tree is being tall. This idea that being tall is like such a successful strategy that evolution kind of just kept reinventing it. So in this way, a tree is a little bit more of an architectural solution in some ways than a single family. And of course, we know that some trees are actually entire communities like Aspen Groves that are really just one organism connected underground by roots. We know that some of these most ancient groves might be over 10,000 years old and cover more than 100 acres and that just absolutely blows my mind.

(05:33):

So there's so much to say about the medicine of trees. Trees help us connect into deep time. They help us connect into great heights. They also help us connect more deeply into our rootedness here on this planet. Tree medicine is a common medicine in our cabinets. If you're an herbalist, you certainly have taken tree medicine before. Tree consciousness itself is it's deep. It's wide. Tree consciousness sees the big picture. It's why I always love going to trees when I'm carrying heaviness in my heart, when a lot's going on in my life, when I need perspective. They see the long line of history. I remember visiting a couple ancient trees when I was in England, trees that were there when my ancestors were there, trees that saw many, many generations of my own ancestors. And I remember being so struck by just thinking about how much that tree had seen, that tree had seen the flourishing of the cultures that created stone circles, that tree had seen the rise of the Celtic civilization, that tree had seen the Roman invasion of the British Isles, the series of invasions by the Anglo-Saxons.

(07:03):

I mean, it really is mind blowing to think about. And so there's something with the medicine of trees around seeing the long perspective of life connecting into a deep time kind of view of your own life and your own existence and really having the patience to grow into the blueprint that is here for you in this lifetime. Trees really help us recognize this blueprint that exists within us. Trees are sometimes our first friends. The willow tree that was planted for me when I was born was one of my first companions and really one of my first teachers. So there's a reason why the ancient Druids, this class, the society within the ancient Celtic world, this class of intellectual, spiritual and ceremonialists who are responsible for the wisdom keeping of these ancient societies, why they kept their sacred temples in groves. For these people, these groves of trees were considered to be the places in which knowledge was kept.

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(08:10):

And this is repeatedly described by the Romans who witnessed this, who came in the Roman occupation, seeing druids practicing in these sacred groves. And the word for this in the Celtic languages was Nemeton. And so these Druids would carry out their rituals, their knowledge keeping, their practices of law and wisdom inside of these groves. And there's evidence that the word Druid itself derives from a proto Indo-European roots. Daruch means oak or tree and wid to know or see. So Druid roughly means oak-knower or one who knows the oak or tree-wise one. And I got the opportunity to visit some of these Nemetons when I was in the British Isles and I was really blown away and I could feel it was like entering a force field walking into these Nemetons. You could really feel why these ancient societies and cultures revered trees. Why their temples themselves were the trees because trees are record keepers, they're record holders, they're wisdom keepers and we can connect into trees to connect into the long line of wisdom that is inherent to humanity, that is inherent to our own ancestors and that is living within the earth.

(09:31):

So there's so much that I could say about trees and tree medicine. But with that, let's hop into this recording where I talk about three tree rituals for a rich life because these three rituals really are still rituals that nourish and feed me and that I think are really rituals that are at the heart of human practice. So let's jump into that now and learn about these three rituals to create a rich life. Why have trees been at the center of our worship as human beings? Well, they are really at the center of our life. Trees provide essential food. Back when animal protein wasn't a given, the mast years in which trees would drop a whole load of nuts were things that fed the community for a harsh winter or even for years to come. Trees have also provided us the fuel that has literally grown our brains.

(10:31):

Scientists hypothesize that human beings discovery of fire is a huge part of what actually helped our brains become the size that they now currently are and the capacity that they now currently have. If it wasn't for wood and fire, we really wouldn't be who we are today. Trees also give us the most essential building blocks of existence, including shelter. Anyone who's taken shelter underneath the tree in the midst of a storm knows this intimately and the very air we breathe. Trees inhale carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen, literally giving us the air that we breathe. Trees can also help to anchor and bring water into an ecosystem, not only by anchoring the soil, but also through their process of transpiration. They actually release water vapor into the environment, creating clouds of moisture and calling in the rain. When I first moved here to the Southern Appalachian Mountains, I knew that the smoky mountains were called the smoky mountains because there was beautiful clouds that floated among the forest, but what I didn't know is that the forests themselves were creating those clouds.

(11:45):

Trees have also been part of our medicine cabinet since time immemorial. Probably most of us, whether we realize it or not, have actually taken medicine that has come from a tree. Aspirin, as we know it, was originally derived from the salicylic acid in Willows. And this is just one example. Trees and their medicine have become a part of our daily existence and they've kept us

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alive for eons. On a more spiritual level, the concept of a world tree sits at the center of many different belief systems throughout the world. As someone of European descent connecting to the concept of the world tree that is really central to many different Indo-European tribes and cultures has really helped me understand my relationship to trees and why they feel so profound to me. In this cross-cultural concept of the world tree, the tree is seen as a primordial connection between the realms, the underworld, the middle world, and the upper world.

(12:49):

Through engaging with the world tree, we can not only connect to the realms of the gods and the goddesses and the spirit realm, but also connect into the souls of those who've passed and the beings who live here in the unseen on earth. Trees were thought to be an antenna for divine energies, a way to interact with the unseen and a map for the universe, both what we can see and what lies just beyond our perception. So I have a few key rituals that I do to interact with trees and tree medicine. The first ritual is to find and honor your local guardian tree. You'll probably notice that there is a tree around you, perhaps around your house or in your ecosystem that really stands out. I think a lot of us look to our heritage or cultures that we admire to find out about which trees they esteemed and then we have a tendency to enshrine those trees as well and that can be beautiful, but what I found is that your local ecology, your backyard, the place where you live has a very particular energy and there will be one tree there that is what I call the guardian tree.

(14:08):

Guardian trees are often visually prominent in the area where you live. It could be that they have a particular formation or they're quite large or they're in an important place within your backyard or in your community. You might even be surprised about who this guardian tree is. I know here where I live in Appalachia, there are certain trees that have been esteemed in the past as these powerful emblems of place, including the hemlock, the chestnut and the oak. But for me, the true guardian tree around these parts is Tulip Poplar. Tulip Poplar is a relatively young tree. It moves into ecosystems pretty quickly after a system's been destabilized or after a clear cut and it grows very fast, very tall, very quickly. And so over time, these tulip poplars after these great forests of Appalachia were cut down have become the elders here. I like to approach the tulip poplars around my home as the guardian trees here.

(15:15):

Now, I think it's a good practice to find one particular tree to approach in this way and then honor in this way because why I call these guardian trees is that I often find they kind of work like gatekeepers for the ecosystem as a whole. If you want to connect to a place, even if it's not the place where you live, any place you go on the earth, if you find that one tree that feels like the guardian of that place and you communicate with that tree, you say, “I love you. I'm here to connect. I'm here to listen,” then that tree will really help open the gateway between you and all of the unseen energies that are there in that ecosystem. So try finding your local guardian tree and leave an offering this spring or go and sing a song, perhaps water the roots and notice how your relationship to the environment changes.

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The next ritual is a logical continuation. Once you've found your guardian tree, you can ask that tree to become a prayer tree for you. We are right in the midst of Beltane season. In the Celtic wheel of the year, Beltane was when spring really hit its fullest flush. It's when the trees started to leaf out and we began that tip into summertime. Beltane was also the time where the veils between the worlds were felt to be quite thin. One traditional practice of honoring Beltane was to have a may tree. Oftentimes these trees were Hawthorne trees, but any tree can be a maytree. In certain maytree rituals, ribbons were tied to this tree, offerings were left, weddings took place underneath the tree, but the tree itself became a place where prayers could be left and prayers could be answered. If we go back to the concept of a tree as this antenna to the divine and an ability to travel between the realms, then it makes sense that we would leave our prayers with a tree and that they could be heard.

(17:14):

To this day, there are still prayer trees around the world, trees where people leave offerings, ribbons, coins. Find a tree in your local environment that wants to be a part of your ritual. Go ahead and ask this tree if you can enshrine its being and you can honor it by turning it into a prayer tree, a place where you go and you leave prayers and you trust that they are being heard. I have found this to be such a beautiful experience. Trees love to be honored in this way and as long as the things that you're leaving are biodegradable or if you tie ribbons to the tree, tying them loosely so the tree still has space to grow, then the tree absolutely loves it. Trees love being bedecked with honor and joy and creativity. So this exercise will really help bring you closer to that particular tree and open you up to the magic of tree consciousness in general.

(18:18):

The very last practice and one of my favorites is to take a journey to the world tree. I first went to the world tree in a journey before I even knew what the concept of the world tree was or the fact that it was central to my Germanic ancestors. I remember showing up in the journey, I started drumming and all of a sudden I saw myself with this gigantic tree, the biggest tree I'd ever seen in my life with roots that looked like tree trunks and branches that went so far up in the sky I couldn't even see how high they went. Now through my studies, I understand that this was actually a traditional way that Norse and Germanic shamans would move through the realms, through interacting with the world tree. I truly believe that this concept of the world tree is something that is innate to all of our human psyches and no matter what your background, you can connect to the world tree as a way to move between the realms.

(19:21):

Traditionally, if you went down into the roots of the tree, you'd be going into the underworld or the lower world, the place where you could talk to the souls of the plants, the souls of the animals, and perhaps even your own ancestors. If you stayed with the trunk of the tree and you explored right around the tree, perhaps it's branches that touched the ground, you'd be exploring the hidden world that is right here with us on the planet, including the realms of the dwarves or the fairies. If you climbed the tree and went all the way up into the topmost branches, this was the way to reach the upper world, the place where you commune with spirit guides, gods, goddesses, and your own wider self. My experiences of working with the World Tree through my shamanic journeys has been incredibly profound. No matter what time of the year or what

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time of my life I'm moving through, every time I go back into a journey with the world tree, I receive something essential.

(20:22):

So if you're new to shamanic journeying or you're not sure how to undertake this, head on over to my website. On my blog, I have an article about how to undertake a shamanic journey and I will walk you through step by step how to go into the journey, how to interact with the elements that come through, some tips on troubleshooting and how to come back home. At its heart, shamanic journey is not leaving our body. It's actually going deeper into our awareness and all of us know how to do this. Shamanic journeying is just like entering into a kind of trance state or a focused meditation. So even if you've never tried this before, I guarantee you that the ability to journey is part of your skillset. Sometimes all it takes is a little bit of perseverance and a whole lot of heart. So if you want more information like this, definitely make sure to check out my catalog of online classes.

(21:17):

I have both shorter programs and more in depth programs to really learn how to use these intuitive tools and connect to the consciousness of the living world. On my website, I also have a totally free quiz to help you understand what your earth healer archetype is. All of us are meant to bring healing to this planet and you have a really special gift to give. This quiz and free class will help you understand that gift in a much deeper way. So if you practice any of these rituals, if you gave them a try, I would love to hear about it. You can leave me a voice message over on my website at [asiasuler.com/remember](http://asiasuler.com/remember). And if you would like to go deeper into the community here, then remember why you are here community and receive more on each episode essays, expanded posts, poetry, revisiting of the intuitive readings.

(22:15):

I expand the intuitive readings and definitely head on over to my Substack. Remember Why You Are Here. I just started this space last month and it's been really magical and special to connect with you all there. So I'll leave the link for that here, but you can also just look up, Remember Why You Are Here on Substack. So as we move into at least where I live, these green months, these months of the tree beings really taking the stage once more, may you find the rituals that nourish you in life? May you have those moments of looking around you and getting that long view on your own existence and may you remember that most important thing of all, why you're here.