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Ten Signs You Are a Shaman and Do Not Know It

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Because I want to be sensitive to the insults of cultural appropriation and because my intention is to bow down in great respect to the indigenous shamans who have blessed me with their teachings, please let me begin by saying that I wrote this article to honor the shamanic tradition, not to violate it in any way. I feel indebted to the shamans who saw themselves in me and helped me understand why I have always felt like I do not belong in mainstream medicine. When I was sitting in a hut with Q'eros shamans in their village at 16,000 feet in the Peruvian Andes, these shamans recognized and spoke to the shaman inside of me, initiated me and gave me my first "mesa," or medicine bundle. I realized I am not alone in being a doctor who would likely have been deemed a shaman if I had been raised in an indigenous village. Yet, when you are one of those shamans who does not know it, it can be hard to fit into mainstream culture.

Because modern culture does not have a role for the shamanic archetype, many people who grow up outside indigenous villages are shamans and do not know it. Many naturally wind up in healing professions, such as medicine, psychology or life coaching. But some wind up in professions where they may feel like they do not fit in at all. Even those who enter the healing professions may feel out of place because the systems of Western medicine and psychology leave

little room for a shaman to practice his or her natural healing art. Many will wind up in various forms of sacred activism — healing the planet, for example — rather than healing people.

Are you a shaman and you do not know it? Here are some telltale signs that you might fit the shamanic archetype.

1. You sense that you are meant to participate in the global shift in consciousness that is currently underway.

We can all feel it — this impending shift that New Agers have talked about for decades. But those with the shamanic archetype do not just feel it. . . they feel it pulling them — like a magnet, towards leadership positions that help facilitate this transformation of human consciousness and evolution of the species.

2. You have been through a difficult initiation, which has prepared you for this leadership role.

In some indigenous cultures, the village knew who the shaman was because he or she was struck by lightning and survived. In modern culture, you may not literally be struck by lightning, but you may have survived some other life-threatening or heart-threatening ordeal. You may have experienced childhood abuse,



sexual violence, a near-death experience or some other trauma that put you through the crucible and forged you into the healing Earth shaman you are becoming.

3. You are an introvert.

Shamans are multi-dimensional beings who dance between the realms of the seen and unseen worlds. So if you are of the shamanic archetype, you may have a hard time navigating the 3D realms of this dimension, which may cause you to withdraw into yourself so you can visit the realms of consciousness where you feel most at home.

way priests are called to the priesthood. But you do not have to be a healthcare provider to have the shamanic archetype. It may transmute itself into healing service to animals, sacred activist causes or conservation of Mother Earth.

7. You may have physical ailments that fall under the category of “shaman sickness.”

In the indigenous cultures, shamans who have been called to service but have not yet said “yes” to the call often wind up struck with physical ailments. In modern culture, these shamanic sicknesses may fall

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4. You feel most at home in nature.

The shamans of a culture are the bridges between nature and humans, serving as translators between the mountains, oceans, rivers, animals and people. You may sense that nature is talking to you or that you get your most “tuned in” downloads when you are surrounded by the natural world.

5. You are very sensitive.

You may feel things others do not feel, see things others do not see, hear things others do not hear, smell things others do not smell and sense things others do not sense. This may make it hard for you to be out in public where you may feel accosted by overstimulation of your senses. If you embody the shamanic archetype, it is likely that you are the kind of person others feel is “too sensitive.” But this sensitivity is a blessing. It is part of your gift.

6. You feel a sort of spiritual calling to ease the suffering of people, animals and nature.

As I describe in my book, *The Anatomy of a Calling*, many healthcare providers are called to medicine the

into difficult to treat categories like chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, chronic Lyme disease, chronic pain disorders and autoimmune disorders. Acceptance of the call to shamanic service often resolves the symptoms of shaman sickness. If you are suffering from one of these illnesses, ask yourself, “Am I a shaman who has not said yes to my calling yet?”

8. You tend to have vivid dreams.

The unseen realm may be communicating with you through your dreams, so try analyzing your dreams. Pay particular attention to any animal totems that may appear in your dreams. Google search the animal and “spirit totem” and see if you can find any messages from the animals in your dreams.

9. You may discover unusual spiritual superpowers or what the yogis call “siddhis.”

You might be psychic. You might get healing visions. You might realize that you can heal people with your hands or that you can telepathically communicate with animals, people or even inanimate objects.



10. You have always felt like you do not quite belong anywhere because you are a bridge.


Shamans tend to live on the outskirts of the village for a reason. They are not like the others — and this can be a blessing! In village life, this is understood and recognized. But in the modern world, it may leave those with the shamanic archetype feeling like they do not ever fit in. But do not despair. You DO fit in. Your role is essential. You may find that you fit in best with others who share this shamanic archetype. Among your fellow shamans, you will feel like you are with family.

Embrace Your Bridge Work

Because shamans are always bridging between worlds, you may find that you are bridging mainstream culture and the culture that wants to be born in the new consciousness, and this may feel uncomfortable. When I realized that I am a bridge between mainstream medicine and the new world of medicine that is being co-created by others who share the shamanic archetype, it brought me such a profound sense of relief! This relief is shared by the healthcare providers who participate in the Whole Health Medicine Institute I founded for doctors and other stealth shamans. If you are one of those bridge workers, please know that you belong with all the other stealth shamans in this program, designed to merge medicine and spirituality.

In our culture, it can be quite challenging to be a stealth shaman. Yes, it is a blessing to have the opportunity to help people end the story of separation, to dissolve the apparent duality into oneness, to fulfill our callings to bring the worlds together, to heal people, animals and the planet. But it can be lonely, disheartening, scary and isolating. I sense that many of us stealth shaman bridge workers have scores of past lives during which we were persecuted for our attempts to bridge the worlds, so no matter how much we know in our hearts that we are all one and we do belong, we have cellular memories of past traumas, during which we were literally killed because we refused to fit in. Therefore, it takes tremendous cour-

age to come out of the spiritual closet as someone who embodies the shamanic archetype. In order to keep being brave, we need to feel safe. To feel safe, we need to foster a sense of belonging so that we do not feel isolated on top of feeling scared. In order to feel safe enough to keep bridging, we need each other.

Are you a shaman who is still in the closet? If so, please know that there are many of us and we hold you close in our hearts while you muster up the moxie to claim your place in the world. Again, I pay my respects to the shamans of all cultures, especially those of the First Nation people who, for so many years, have held safe the gifts we are now ready to receive. 



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