

RUN UP TO BELTANE

Beltane Offline: Part I of II

These are activities you can do inside, outside (which is more important than ever), and also practical actions you can take for nature. Hopefully there are some fun new things to do and learn.

These activities surround developing your own connection to the elements and various key points from Beltane's performance/ritual. These are indeed largely individualistic actions of simple things to do at home, but this is for now, whilst keeping in mind the more important stance of supporting systemic change. Buddy up! It would be nice to do these activities and share your reflections with a friend. If you know of people who don't use the internet that would be into this, please print off and send to them.

(It should go without saying, but please use your common sense and follow government guidelines with regard to social distancing during this period.)

Concepts and characters

The story of Beltane at its essence is the coming of Summer.

It is celebrated by Beltane Fire Society in a ritual/performance with a central story and many magical colourings of drums, acro, fire spinning and body movement to express celtic mythology in a unique and immersive way.

The central story is the procession of the May Queen, who is gathering and weaving the elements into a tapestry of the year to come, the death and rebirth of the Green Man, and the coming together of community to create a bonfire to welcome Summer.

Green Man

The Green Man arrives to begin his journey of growth in preparation for the coming of summer. He embodies mankind's reliance on nature and his rebirth signals the coming of the new season. The process comes to a climax by his unification with the May Queen and joy radiates from his being, showering the world in light and growth at this time of new beginning.

Growth

Grief - opening a space for any sadness that may be present in us and breathing into it.

Gratitude - looking at what is beautiful in life and using it as our torch to guide us from the darkness to the light

May Queen

Who is she, the May Queen?

We see her in the flowers, her joy unfolds the buds

From the tips of the trees to the roots and the leaves

And under the moss in the mud

Her breath is light her spirit is bright

Dancing along the lough

But her wrath is real, and from her do not steal, or on your door her storm doth knock



She created the land; renews and protects it see
Ignite her flame, but know it won't tame
When it spreads, it's wild and free

She's the earth we belong to
The triple Goddess in mother form within you
She's the one we honour, she's the one we know
She's the heart that beats within
She's the heart that beats below

The rest of the poem & the May Queen's message for this year about hope can be [read here](#).

Meditation exploring hope inspired by the quote 'Hope is not optimism, it's acceptance that we don't know what will happen.' - Rebecca Skonti

Meditation to find gift inspired by the words 'When we feel our pain our gift is freed' - Joanna Macy

Outside: *this activity is designed to help you find 'our gift hidden in the challenge'*

Set intention to 'find your gift' and see what you feel drawn to on your daily walk. What does your object/plant look, feel, smell, sound like? How might it relate to you or your gift?

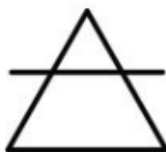
Going through fire arch

Outside: Go for a walk and notice places of transition - sunset/sunrise and the balance between light and dark, a road verge that is neither concrete nor field, a river or path that transitions from narrow to wide, a reflection of the natural cycles in transition, like a fallen tree decomposing. Choose one and stay with it for a few moments, noticing feelings and thoughts that arise associated with the various zones of transition. Play around with moving between the zones, remembering that your breath can always harness you, no matter how chaotic and transitional your surroundings are.

Inside: Make a smudge stick for Beltane night - dried herbs that are burned to encourage feelings of calm and to clear the space. You can use any or all of the herbs listed: sage, lavender, rosemary, rose petals, heather, meadowsweet, mugwort, thyme, pine. Take a bunch of fresh herbs, and wrap up using twine/natural fibre string, tying tightly at either end. Hang up by the window to dry.

Action: Diversity thrives in transitional spaces. See if you can protect a transitional space from being cut down by investigating and making a sign about the wildlife that might grow there (e.g. meadowsweet grows in road verges).

Elemental exploration





Exploring what the air element means to you

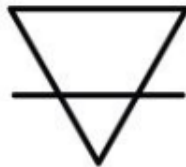
Outside: Listen in the forest or local greenspace/communal garden on your daily walk. Can you write a poem or prose about the soundscape you hear? Gather air related materials to make a mobile at home (e.g. feathers, pine branches that look like lungs).

Inside: Listen to [song about air \(When I rise written by Wendell Berry\)](#). Make art out of rubbish e.g. a mosaic of what air means to you. Breath exercises help calm the body and mind, and revitalize our bodies e.g. inhale-hold-exhale 7-4-7 seconds.

Action: [Build a bird feeder](#) out of waste for your window

[Take part in a swift survey](#) from your bedroom window

Think about how you can protect [whales](#) and inner city trees where possible.



Exploring what the earth element means to you

Outside: Notice weeds and herbs around where you live, connect with them meditating beside them or foraging for tea/cooking. A really beautiful question from a book called 'Intuitive Herbalism' is 'How do my ancestors know you?' Many herbs have a lot of nutritional benefit right now for wellbeing, such as immune system support or for anxiety, see if you can research them. [Here's a wonderful place to start](#) and remember to [harvest sustainably](#).

Find a tree on your daily walk. Walk around it or meditate beside it and see what insights/feelings arise. Mimic the tree's movement with your body. Take a picture to remember it and bring home. What mythology surrounds the tree? Make a few sketches - one of the space between the tree branches, one of the essence of the tree and finally a naturalistic sketch of it.

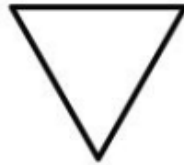
Walk barefoot in the mud where you can, gather earth related items and create a collage on the ground of what earth means to you.

Inside: Listen to [song about earth \(I'm going home\)](#). Cook a nourishing meal or a bannock, gather clay-soil and mould a shape of what the earth element means to you.

Action: [Plant wildflower or any seeds](#), in cartons on windowsill or guerrilla garden where you can

Plant trees or [support local groups that do](#) with time/money if you can

[Learn how to mend clothes to avoid landfill](#), and any other way you can creatively refuse, reduce, reuse, repair, regift, recover (upcycle) before recycling.



Exploring what the water element means to you

Outside: Make a list of all the bodies of water you meet on your daily walk. Observe the movement within the water body, if any. Write three words about them. Make a list of words or form into a poem.

Inside: Drink water or have a shower to connect with water. Listen to [song about selkies \(murky water written by Anna O'Neill\)](#) and draw what comes up, with water colours or dip your finger into water and draw on paper.

Find a source of running water. If possible, mimic it through body movement. Find a well and learn about the history of it.

Take part in the [Water Element group's activity on Facebook](#)

Action: Listen to/read selkie stories,

make a bird bath (on windowsill, in greenspace, in back garden), make a hibernaculum or a pond out of an old bucket,

sign petitions to protect water bodies near you (reefs, fishing, against oil (spills))

Beach or river clean



Exploring what the fire element means to you

Outside or inside: Listen to [song about fire \(Fire sacred fire\)](#). Make a fire or light a candle, mimic fire/candle movement with your body, draw or write free verse using charcoal or a pencil what the fire element means to you.

Learn a drum beat, song or story you might share for when we all meet again round a fire.



Action: Fire is not in balance globally. Explore what climate change mitigation actions you can take on an individual, community and systemic level.

For example, [listen to indigenous people](#); support their [rights to their land](#) by [challenging corporations](#), bearing in mind what they [face beyond wildfires](#)

Bower

Outside: On a walk look out for somewhere you could call home, if possible, sit there for a while. Observe what sort of home you choose - was it sheltered, hidden, open, spacious. Sit briefly and notice if any other animals visit you. Find an object that represents your chosen place to take back, so that you always have that natural space with you.

Action: [create a home for nature in your local area](#)

Next steps

Useful reflective questions written by Joanna Macy about taking next steps to be active hope in the world.

TRY THIS: IDENTIFYING YOUR GOALS AND RESOURCES

This process works well when you team up with someone else, taking turns to interview and support each other.

1. If you knew you could not fail, what would you most want to do for the healing of our world?
2. What specific goal or project could you realistically aim to achieve in the next twelve months that would contribute to this?
3. What resources, inner and outer, do you have that will help you do this?

Inner resources include specific strengths, qualities, and experience, as well as the knowledge and skills you've acquired.

External resources include relationships, contacts, and networks you can draw on, as well as material resources such as money, equipment, and places to work or recharge.

4. What resources, inner and external, will you need to acquire? What might you need to learn, develop, or obtain?
5. How might you stop yourself? What obstacles might you throw in the way?
6. How will you overcome these obstacles?
7. What step can you take in the next week, no matter how small — making a phone call, sending an email, or scheduling in some reflection time — that will move you toward this goal?

List of links referenced above

Green man:

Growth: <https://beltane.org/2020/03/09/our-green-man-steps-forward-and-introduces-himself/>

Grief: <https://soundcloud.com/beltane-fire-society/space-for-grief-a-guided-meditation>

Gratitude: <https://soundcloud.com/beltane-fire-society/gratitude-a-guided-meditation>

May Queen:

Meditation to find gift inspired by the words 'When we feel our pain our gift is freed' -

Joanna Macy: <https://soundcloud.com/beltane-fire-society/gift-a-guided-meditation>

Her message this year (link song/ poem - <https://beltane.org/2020/03/25/a-message-of-hope-from-our-may-queen/>;

Meditation exploring hope inspired by the quote 'Hope is not optimism, it's acceptance that we don't know what will happen.' - Rebecca Skonti: <https://soundcloud.com/beltane-fire-society/hope>

Air: Song (When I rise written by Wendell Berry): <https://soundcloud.com/beltane-fire-society/when-i-rise>

bird feeder <https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-kids/games-and-activities/activities/make-a-recycled-bird-feeder/> ; swift survey

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/conservation-and-sustainability/safeguarding-species/help-us-help-swifts/> ; protect whales

<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2019/12/pdf/natures-solution-to-climate-change-chami.pdf>

Earth: place to start <https://www.grassrootsremedies.co.uk/resources/herb-profiles/> ;

harvest sustainably <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/things-to-do/foraging/foraging-guidelines/> ; song about earth (I'm going home):

<https://soundcloud.com/beltane-fire-society/home-to-motherland>

plant seeds <http://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/>; local tree-planting groups <https://three-hares-woodland.org/> ; how to mend clothes to avoid landfill

<https://www.1millionwomen.com.au/blog/how-mend-your-own-clothes/> ;

Water: song about selkies (murky water written by Anna O'Neill):

<https://soundcloud.com/beltane-fire-society/send-murky-waters>

Water Element group's activity!

<https://www.facebook.com/nahikari.mendoza/videos/10219562818995381> ;

Fire: song about fire (Fire sacred fire): <https://soundcloud.com/beltane-fire-society/fire-sacred-fire>

listen to indigenous people

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/02/amazon-destruction-earth-brazilian-kayapo-people> ;

support their rights to their land <https://amazonwatch.org/work> ;

challenge corporations <https://www.ran.org/> ;

what they face beyond wildfires

<https://www.facebook.com/ifnotusthenwho.me/videos/849095962152496/>



Songs sung by Katie O'Neill and Francesco Benvenuti or Anna O'Neill
Border designed by Nate Kelso

