

BEFRIENDING A TREE

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Broaden your perspective of Place through the simple practice of Befriending a Tree.

I invite you to befriend a tree. Sit against the trunk or lay beneath the leaves. Know that the tree's branches above you welcome the changing sky; the roots below you are faithful and patient anchors to this place. Simply be. See what emerges.

Step 1:

Go outside and find a tree that you feel drawn to: perhaps in your front yard, growing in the park down the street, or newly met on a hike through the forest. Go out with the intention of dedicating time to spend with this tree. Set aside real, valuable time.

Step 2:

Once you've found a tree that speaks to you in whatever way a tree may speak, introduce yourself. This could be a spoken introduction, or resting against the bark, or picking up a leaf from the ground and pressing it into the palm of your hand. Do what feels right to you.

Step 3:

Try not to refer to the tree as "it".

Step 4:

Take a moment to quiet yourself. Let go of what is not here, in this moment. Here you are and here is the tree. Let that be enough for now.

Step 5:

Sit or stand beneath the tree. Spend a couple of minutes simply observing the tree; notice colours, patterns in the bark, shapes of leaves, the smells around you.

Step 6:

Now move away from observation and try to see the tree with fresh eyes. Let go of your ideas or expectations about what this tree should be. Allow it to enter into your imagination and surprise you. Where does this tree take you? What do you remember, feel, or think about? Consider the tree in the wider setting, the ecosystem.

Step 7:

After spending a few minutes with the tree, you may find that your mind begins to form questions for the tree. Some of them will seem silly and obvious; others won't have words to go with them; others will be unanswerable. It doesn't matter - go ahead and ask. Questions such as: What is it like to be you? Are you cold? Can you feel those possums running up and down you? What are your roots doing? How do you experience time? How do you understand where you are? What does it feel like to be here?

Step 8:

You may already know or choose to find out about the species of the tree, the age, the history or you may not and prefer to simply be with the tree.

Step 9:

Make a point of returning to the tree three or four times over the course of this week or whenever you can. Notice how long you spend at the tree as the week goes on. Notice what shifts in you - what you begin to see that you didn't see before - as you get acquainted with this tree. What does it mean to care for and befriend a tree?