



FAQ About Journey Realms and Helping Spirits

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What is the shamanic definition of “power”?

Power is the ability to shift consciousness to make things happen, that is, to bring through wisdom or healing from the spiritual realms (usually called the Upper and Lower Worlds) here into the material/physical realm (also called the Middle World). It is the ability to use energy to create transformation in ourselves, others, and the planet.

What is the shamanic definition of “energy”?

Energy is the quality or nature of a consciousness (calming, energizing, healing, awakening, etc.).

What does it mean that I am a multi-dimensional being?

You are having this one individual lifetime experience (perhaps your “soul” for this go-round), but you also have for all infinity a sum of all the lives you’ve lived plus the ones you’ll have in the “future” (your “spirit”). (Soul/Spirit distinction is from Ivo Dominguez, *Spirit Speak*: 87)

How can I tell if I’m in the Upper World, Lower World, or Middle World?

“Upper” and “Lower” generally refers to the direction you sense yourself traveling when the journey begins: a sensation of floating up leads to the Upper World, while a sense of going down leads to the Lower World. Both directions assume that you feel yourself passing through a “barrier” at some point that is not there in the ordinary, physical Middle World. For example, you start going down through a tunnel to the Lower World; you start floating up and sense a film or membrane or fog at some point signifying that you’ve entered the Upper World. If you do not experience the barrier/transition, you are still in the Middle World, even if you are on the Moon or in a different galaxy.

Do all shamanic traditions have these three worlds, Upper, Lower, and Middle?

Most do, but not all. Some, like Celtic cosmology, have two: a visible realm (“Middle World”) and an invisible realm (the Upper and Lower Worlds, combined into one). And in some systems that use all three, the Lower World is also an egoic realm where ancestors go but do not cross over.

What are Upper and Lower World helping spirits?

These beings are formless energy that has no ego; we call them into form to more readily relate to Source energy. They don't just represent Source/Oneness; they are Source/ Oneness, packaged in a way we can digest, access, relate to. Be open: they can show up as a child, someone from the future, a “mythical,” cartoon, or extinct species; you never know. They may represent the whole species (Uber Turtle, with a capital T). If they represent one specific, individual animal or person, they are usually a Middle World spirit. Unlike Upper and Lower World spirits, Middle World spirits have an ego.

What are Middle World Spirits?

Unlike Upper and Lower World spirits, Middle World spirits have an ego and a specific form that is theirs, not just a garment per se that they wear so we can see and relate to them better. Their form may be physical (as in a tree, wolf, lake, etc.) or etheric (as in a fairy or a ghost who has not crossed over).

Are Upper and Lower World helping spirits all-powerful?

According to classical shamanism, they are infinite beings, thought to be all powerful in the Upper and Lower Worlds. Their only limitations are here in the Middle World, where they may need to work through us to make things happen.

Why do you recommend that our first helping spirit be “ego-less” and from the transcendent realms?

Transcendent beings from the Upper and Lower Worlds are usually unconditionally compassionate and have no ego or agenda. Because of this, the quality of advice they give tends to be better, especially if

you word your question properly. They can help you see through any illusion or deception, and they will not dominate you, get angry or judgmental, require sacrifice, etc., unless they are acting out something for you. Middle World spirits are important to work with, but they necessarily have their own agenda and egos and require “special handling”; training in how to work with them is recommended.

Can I run into the wrong kinds of spirits when I journey?

Ingerman notes: Most of us have so many seeds of fear planted within us that people starting to journey are thinking, “what should I be fearful of?” As long as you hold the intention to meet up with compassionate spirits, you’ll meet beings of that compassionate, transcendent realm. Shamanism is about the discipline of purposely holding the intention of meeting up with compassionate spirits from the transcendent realms who hold us in love. Part of the practice is learning the discipline and knowing that you’re being held and loved.

How many helping spirits or power animals should one have?

No one right answer exists. Some people have only one their entire life; others have a zoo or entourage. Most folks have a few; practitioners who regularly do healing work may have helping spirits who do healing work for other people in addition to the ones who support them personally. In shamanism, we generally work only with our own known, familiar helping spirits; we do not open to all spirits, including gods and goddesses.

Must I have a helping spirit with me when I journey?

Sandra Ingerman teaches that you can journey through the spirit world without a helping spirit and that you only need a helping spirit for doing healing work. Being accompanied by a helping spirit is also helpful when you’re journeying in the Middle World — not essential, but helpful.

Is it okay to tell others who my helping spirit is?

It’s best to ask each helping spirit how they feel about your revealing their identity. The answer varies by tradition. It’s generally considered okay to reveal the identity of your helping spirit unless — you are boasting, or —they are a Middle World spirit and thus vulnerable to being harmed, tricked, overpowered, or killed.

What kind of communication glitches can occur between me and my helping spirits?

- you may be projecting your stuff onto your helping spirit;
- you may not want to hear what your helping spirit is showing or telling you;
- you may simply misunderstand what your helping spirit is showing or telling you;
- you may be interpreting what your helping spirit is saying literally instead of figuratively (remember: the spirits usually speak in metaphors); or
- your helping spirit may be a Middle World, not an Upper/Lower World, spirit; Middle World spirits can sometimes give poor guidance or make mistakes, just like we can.

Will my helping spirit leave me?

At least one ego-less helping spirit is with you from birth to death. This spirit may take on a different form as you change, but they remain at heart that same original condensed bit of Oneness, of endless compassion, which is their true nature. Spirits with egos (Middle World spirits) may leave you if they feel their work with you is done or if they feel you have not properly honored them or have failed to meet their needs.