



## Helping Spirits

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*The spirits are not simply another resource in this exquisite world to be used, consumed, or squandered. They are not here to do our bidding, but to teach us who we are, why we are here, and what it means to be truly and fully human. The art of shamanism is the art of relationship with all things, physical and non-physical.*

—Dr. Stephan Beyer



*The trance state is key to shamanism. Shamans travel...outside space and time, which allows us to see what's normally invisible and is usually referred to as the spirit world, which makes us think we're talking to ghosts. English doesn't have the right words to express this spiritual dimension. Shamanism develops and enhances our 5 senses and develops the capacity to use them on purpose. Three-fourths of who we are—the emotional, mental, and spiritual—is invisible to our 5 senses but affecting us constantly. From a shamanic perspective, everything has invisible energy—rocks, weather, trees, etc. Shamanism accesses all these invisible realms, not just the human ones. This capacity*

*is important in shamanism because everything begins first in that invisible world, then it manifests in [visible] reality.*

—Christina Pratt, *Why Shamanism Now*

While we are living a lifetime in a form (human or other than human), we are egoic and lack the non-egoic vision. It's also harder for us to see the Whole (or anything, really) as it truly is because we are in a body. Our filters, necessary for us to function in a form, interfere with our ability to accurately perceive reality. It helps to have a "buddy" who is not embodied and can see clearly the Whole. After the body dies and we cross over, we are non-egoic again.

### **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).

### **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.

### **ARE SOME HELPING SPIRITS BETTER THAN OTHERS?**

Aside from the distinctions above, some Middle World spirits are more powerful than we are, some are equal, others are less powerful. Each has a special value and purpose. Size doesn't matter: Mouse is more powerful than Bear in some traditions.

### ***WHY DO YOU RECOMMEND THAT OUR FIRST HELPING SPIRIT BE “EGO-LESS”?***

Transcendent beings from the Upper and Lower Worlds are usually unconditionally compassionate. This means that they

- have no ego or agenda, so the quality of advice they give tends to be better, especially if you word your question properly;
- can see through any illusion or deception;
- will not dominate you, get angry or judgmental, etc., unless they are acting out something for you; and
- need no offering from you and so need no food or rest and can work 24/7.

Middle World (egoic or ethnocentric) spirits are important to work with, but they have their own agenda and egos and require special handling; training in how to work with them is advisable.

### ***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 fearful. If 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 a specific, clear intention 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. 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 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 or to strangers.

### ***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. I agree and add that the guidance of helping spirits is a key component of classical shamanism, so some would say that journeys are not shamanic practice if no helping spirit is involved.

### ***IS IT OKAY TO TELL OTHERS WHO MY HELPING SPIRIT IS?***

It's best to ask why you want to share it and to ask that helping spirit how they feel about your revealing their identity. The answer varies by tradition. It's generally kept confidential but is technically 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, or overpowered.

### ***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 change form as you change, but they remain at heart that same original condensed bit of Oneness, which is their true nature. Spirits with egos (Middle World spirits) may leave you if they feel their work with you is done, if they feel you have not properly honored them or not met their needs.