

This column is devoted to one of my passions – conceptualizing about the meaning, power and impact of the re-emergence of the Goddess in popular culture. She often comes to me in a quick flash, an age old worldview re-emerging, or a new combination of elements, which I hone and then contribute to our group imagining of Goddess-centered spirituality.

The Goddess is rising all over the world. The significant press she receives, both pro and con, attest to this. For me, the values She represents most characterize Her nature. As part of my spiritual practice, I regularly refine my understanding of earth-centered values and re-ascribe to them. Through this process, I visualize an idealistic whole that carries a personal, communal and cosmic dimension. Then, ways to contribute to its eventual materialization are revealed. Here are a smattering of the values I court.

Discover and develop personal power, creativity

When I take a creative attitude toward life's activities, even the most mundane, a surge of energy can turn routine into adventure. This sense of adventure brings me closer to my uniqueness which is where the power lies. To demilitarize our thinking and come to appreciate diversity allows us also to find our own combination of juices. Engaging raw creativity through gardening, painting, crafts and writing has revealed the particulars of the process, which I find can then be applied to almost any undertaking.

Claim a passion (or two)

To want to do something because it makes me feel interior pleasure is my description of passion. Desiring a close relationship with another person is classically called a *passion*. This admirable form is the usual one attributed to the Goddess, but this is not the only one She sponsors. Passion can be artistic, intellectual or an aspiration to a specific state of being. Whenever I have the means to experience them, my passions compel me to overcome resistance to what they have to offer, which sometimes means taking risks and making mistakes.

Experience empathy and compassion

By consciously making myself available to others, I have an opportunity to see life from points of view other than my own. I find the challenge is not getting lost in the complexity of another's problems, but to be able to feel the other's dilemma. Since feelings are usually characterized in our culture as female, the Goddess is sure to be present when I decide to focus on this aspect of my personality. When I am lucky, I gain the vision and the tools to offer usable assistance, not plat-

itudes or sentimentality. The big ones for me to overcome are: making promises I do not have the ability or resources to fulfill, without becoming hardened to the plight of another; or, adopting a "blame the victim" rhetoric to ease my sense of inadequacy in the face of suffering. When I am able to avoid these, my urge toward compassion becomes more useful all around.

Practice nurturing

Our fast paced culture seems to have lost understanding of the process of support, whether for a child, an environment, a community, or our own personality. Nurturing has been reduced to a low status, underpaid occupation. Goddess values tell me that nurturing others as well as our own abilities is an essential, life-long enterprise. Abandoned kitties at the door, dying friends and relatives needing comfort, partners in confusion, communities in stress are all opportunities to nurture. Self-nurturing can be the most overlooked. When faced with trying situations, finding ways to nurture my own spiritual emergence, rather than highlighting my deficiencies through self criticism, has cured the deadening effects of excessive competition, all too often the cause of the difficulty.

Welcome change

We live in a culture that advocates making life as solid as possible. Popular wisdom is to hold on to what you have for as long as possible. I have found the Goddess is not fond of this approach and frequently tosses into the mix unconsidered and unexpected challenges. We talk often about the process of birth, death and rebirth, but engaging this cyclical perspective has required that I welcome on-going change into my life. In retrospect, usually I can happily acknowledge that even the off-the-wall changes I resented, but had to accept, actually facilitated my journey rather than threw me off course.

This value composite provides me with a pattern that is flexible, yet structured enough to aid in reacting to life's opportunities and possibilities, helping especially at the crossroads of choice. You most probably have created a collage of your own most durable lessons. Yet it seems to me, in our effort to be magical, we should direct more intention toward recommitting to our values. By continually revisiting them, we create a refreshed context for profound shifts in what is possible.

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Goddess Alive, Magic Afoot Collage of Values

by Elizabeth Fisher