

Four Qualities of a Good Shamanic Mentor: Finding Your Way

Meg Beeler

If you have been studying shamanic ways for a while, as I have, there comes a point when you know a *lot*. You may have experienced multiple cultural perspectives, or studied with several teachers. You may have been an apprentice, a Sun Dancer, or a graduate of many workshops. You may have a calling, or a desire to be of service, and don't see how to integrate all your wisdom.

This is when it's good to step back and reflect on what you need: who and what would help you step onto your true path, find your unique qualities, and build confidence in your deepest shamanic/spiritual purpose?

Choices

Let's start with a few distinctions.

A **teacher** focuses on a curriculum rather than your situation. Whether it is sharing a set of practices, conveying a worldview or cosmovision, or helping you develop specific skills and knowledge, the teacher guides you through the content. You take in whatever you can. For example, you'd go to a shamanic teacher to learn to do soul retrieval, be introduced to Huichol worldview and ceremony, or learn tracking and divination.

A **master** guides by example, requiring an apprentice to participate, observe, practice in order to learn to do what the master does. For example, an Ayahuascero would expect years of ceremonial participation, dietas, and direct revelation from plant spirits before a student would be anointed as a successor.

A **mentor** focuses on helping a person develop their personal qualities and competencies so they become a fuller version of themselves. A shamanic mentor helps the mentee recognize and believe in her essence, what spiritual teachers call her pre-existing nature. She guides a mentee in integrating her wisdom and finding her path. She is likely to help the mentee discover what gift she is being asked to

make on behalf of the future.

A shamanic mentor (like any other kind of mentor) draws on her own experience, perception, and insight, along with the perception and insight of her spirit helpers—to guide, prompt, teach, and encourage.

Finding Your Way

Traditionally, a shamanic calling came in one of two ways. If you were “called by spirit,” you had to find your teachers and mentors; they put you through tests before agreeing, and sometimes you had to beg. If the shaman’s role was inherited, training came from your relative—father, uncle, or grandmother. Sometimes shamans and healers would “recognize” a person from outside their tribe who deserved to learn—as in the case of Mandaza Kademwa of Zimbabwe—and they would share their wisdom.

For those of us born outside indigenous cultures, there is rarely a traditional “community recognition” of a shamanic role. Fortunately for us, we have access to and can learn about many traditions. Yet, even if we feel called and experience deep resonance with a particular tradition (as I did with the Andean cosmovision) the tradition does not necessarily have a way to recognize your calling.

So finding teacher, mentor, or master becomes more complex. And issues of respect, reciprocity, and avoiding cultural appropriation are essential to pay attention to.

My Experience

My own experience with mentors has been informal, not explicit. In retrospect, I understand that I have had three mentors. From one I learned to create large public, participatory ceremony by observing and working alongside her. With another I observed how to live with an open and loving heart. A third showed me how to manage a non-profit organization with grace.

During my 25 years of shamanic work, I walked three paths (Andean, core shamanism, and Medicine for the Earth). I knew they were complementary. Yet I couldn’t see for a very long time how to integrate the paths, the teachings, or the circles of people interested in and surrounding them.

Megbeeler.com

None of my teachers were available for the kind of guidance and dialogue that would have helped me clarify. So in the mysterious ways of spirit, I integrated them as I wrote about them (see [Weave the Heart of the Universe into Your Life: Aligning with Cosmic Energy](#)).

When people began coming to me for mentoring, I had to ask for a lot of advice from spirit. I had to figure out how mentoring was different from teaching, which I've done my whole life. (At 15, I began teaching swimming. I successively I taught history, ceramics, and how to use computer applications. I practiced shamanism for years before I began teaching others.)

Four Qualities of a Good Mentor

Reflecting on and becoming conscious of the **qualities you are drawn to** and **what kind of person you are looking for** will help you make clearer choices.

These four qualities are generally recognized as essential for any kind of mentor:

1. **Your relationship is one of mutual trust and respect**, rapport, and what some call "chemistry." In other words, you get along easily, feel resonance with each other, and experience mutuality.
2. **Your mentor focuses on helping you** develop your character and values **by embodying** them. Qualities such as self awareness, empathy, compassion, reciprocity, respect for others, open-heartedness, trust, generosity of spirit, and egoless self-confidence are ones I find particularly valuable.
3. **A mentor supports you** by encouraging your wild creativity, keeping their judgments to themselves, and helping you be more aware of your great qualities. I'm not talking about a sycophant, but a person who genuinely appreciates you and helps you appreciate yourself while gently guiding you away from unproductive assumptions.
4. **A mentor's goal is to help you become 100% uniquely you.** They help you develop personal shamanic qualities and competencies so you become a fuller version of who you are, find your calling, and live from your essence. (Click [here](#) for more about ways a mentor might help you.) In shamanic terms, a mentor will help you expand your perception, open the doorways to your wider

understanding of yourself within the interconnected universe, and show you options for stepping into your sacred power more fully.

In sum, an ideal mentor is someone you respect and admire. She has qualities or a way of being that you are drawn to. And she focuses on helping you illumine your unique calling in the world.

Meg Beeler— Author, Shamanic Guide, and Spiritual Mentor—helps you discover your essence and joyful connection with the universe through mentoring, training, healing, and community ceremony. A lifelong explorer of shamanic, animist, and meditative consciousness, Meg is the creator of Energy Alchemy™, founder of the [Earth Caretakers Wisdom School](#), and author of [Weave the Heart of the Universe into Your Life: Aligning with Cosmic Energy](#) . She works with clients worldwide and lives on Sonoma Mountain in the San Francisco Bay Area. Discover how Meg mentors [here](#).