

Some principles of Therapeutic Shamanism (an incomplete guide...)

Commitment to reality.

- Striving to face things as they are, not distorting our perceptions by interpreting things as we would like them to be, or according to our belief systems. Hold all beliefs very lightly.

Mindfulness.

- Awareness is the key. 'One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious' (Jung). 'One cannot change what one is not aware of' (Pearls).
- Awareness starts with self-awareness. 'What is my part in this?' 'What is this bringing up for me?'

Non-violence.

- Always seek to do no harm.
- Seek to empower wherever possible. Dis-empowering is harming.

The client is the expert of their process.

- You might have good exploring skills that can help the client's journey, but the landscape is theirs. You are the hired help.

Keep good boundaries.

- Modelling good boundaries is part of the work.
- Always respect other's boundaries. They are there for a good reason. Befriend resistance; don't get into a battle with it. Challenging others has it's place, but we have to: (1) earn the right to do it (2) know when to back off.
- Respecting boundaries means respecting confidentiality.
- Just as we seek never to take power from others, so we seek not to give our own power away to others. Respect for others, and for respect ourselves.

Less is often more.

- Awareness is often all that's needed; trust the process.
- A gentle approach can be very powerful.
- You don't need to be in a hurry. Practice patience. Remember, big trees grow slowly.

- Be wary of rushing to fix things. How do you know it's not meant to be broken?

Listen, listen, listen.

- Never, ever, underestimate the power of 'just' listening.

Try to treat everything with compassion and respect.

- Everything is sacred and part of the web (no matter how cunningly disguised!), and as such, is worthy of respect.
- Strive to practice impeccable ethics.

Try always to work with permission.

- The only time it is permissible to work on someone (or something) without their permission is if it is the only way to stop them doing harm to others. All such intervention should be done with compassion, and only the minimum necessary to stop the harm. Anything more is tantamount to rape. It will also often tend to rebound on you (no matter how 'good' your intentions were).

Trying to stay out of the drama triangle is always a good idea.

- Being the victim, rescuer or persecutor never helps, and always leads to tears and violence.

You don't need to try to be clever.

- Or the expert. Or impressive.
- Practice humility.

It's nearly always useful to pay attention to the edges.

- What is not being said; behind the words; what is not being allowed; the outsider; the hidden; the outcast; the spurned; the misfit; betwixt and between.
- Welcome diversity.

Know your limits.

- Don't work when out of your depth, or when you are not in the right state to help, or the right person to help.
- It's OK to screw up sometimes. The important thing is to own it and take responsibility.
- If you keep screwing up though, it's time to get some help!