

Change Your Story, Change Your Life: Using Shamanic and Jungian Tools to Achieve Personal Transformation

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My First Shamanic Journey

I recall lying on the carpet, a pillow nestled under my head. The shaman, an elderly woman with waist-long gray hair, tranquil blueish-gray eyes and a soft voice, rhythmically beat on a drum. The afternoon light faded as my focus filtered inward. I walked down a twisty damp tunnel, spindly roots twined toward me as if gnarled fingers. I heard a melodic voice, syllables concocting a make-believe song of darkness within hope. I saw a young girl in a thin nightgown twirling on her tippy toes. Her hair was matted; her eyes shone bright with fear. "Don't go down there," she said, and then motioned further down the path. "There's monsters down there."



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During an hour-long journey I met three of my dissociated parts: the young girl; a teenager lying on a bed of nails, blood seeping from her wounds, refusing to move; and a brilliant ball of white light. Both females spoke with me, shared their fear, their sorrow, their pain. Each agreed to rejoin me with certain rules in place. The brilliant white light released a flurry of crystalline flakes; I watched millions of tiny glittering crystals cascade around me. I felt bathed in light, in love, in life.



Using Shamanic and Jungian Tools Today

Twenty-four years have passed since my first shamanic journey. When I received Carl Greer's book, *Change Your Story, Change Your Life: Using Shamanic and Jungian Tools to Achieve Personal Transformation*, I thought I knew what I'd find in the pages of his text. I was not prepared for the depth of detail—both written by Carl and expected from me, the reader, embarking on a journey of self-transformation. Carl's intention to unite the three tiers of his teachings—shamanism, Jungian psychology, and clinical psychology—resulted in a dense tomb of knowledge and experience. I felt as if he

pulled one of my all-time favorite tricks when teachers gave a page limit on an assignment: reduce the font size, halve the margins, decrease the indentations. Carl has managed to fit a lifetime's worth of work into 221 pages of a 6 inch by 9 inch softcover book. And he offers, in return for your dedicated attention, support to discover and experience: your life span via a timeline; how to course the trajectories that catapulted you into and out of relationships; the patterns behind the behaviors motivating you to seek assistance; sensing into the feeling states prompting pain and suffering; how to float inward yet simultaneously outward and tap into the united consciousness of all that is; how to re-vision and energize your life's narratives to move toward lasting change.

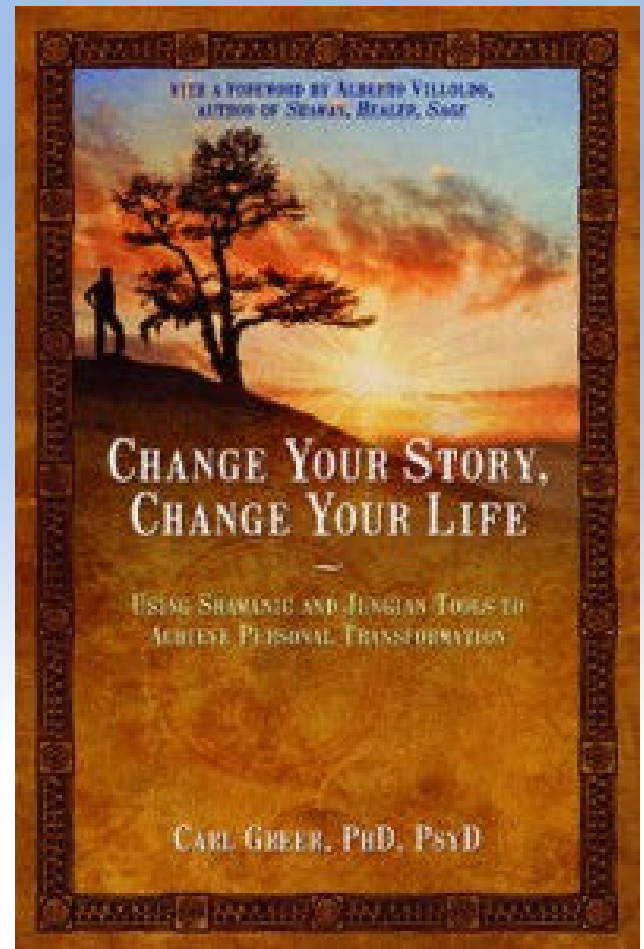
This is not a quick read. Nor is it a fill-in-the-blank workbook with stem starter sentences and pre-recorded CDs offering guided visualizations. This book is both textbook and guidebook; it is both informational and experiential. For me, working full time and then some, I think I want a year to delve into and complete every exercise in this book. Transcripts for numerous meditations and visualizations are provided in the book. Carl suggests you either work in pairs, or in a group, or record the transcript in order to listen and focus and be present with the journey. Other readers have asked Carl to consider creating CDs to accompany the text. I know that listening to the sound of my own voice triggers more criticism than self-exploration—I vote for prerecorded CDs.

Carl clearly provides how-to instructions for both reading the book and for each specific exercise (for accessing both the conscious and unconscious mind). According to Carl, shamanic and Jungian approaches complement one another—the shamanic practices facilitate healing before understanding comes and the Jungian approaches illuminate unconscious processes

in order to consciously examine and then heal. “Both traditions involve accessing energies, often embodied in symbols, images, and inner figures” (p. 18). Although exercises that involve journaling and conscious analysis are offered before those that invite you to access your unconscious mind, the book is formatted such that you can skip around. You can start in Chapter Three with exercises that resonate with you and explore your current story and then move to Chapter Four to rewrite them.

As you start to revision your narrative, you can experiment with shamanic journeys, which, according to Carl, are “experiences involving altering your consciousness and interacting with transpersonal realms” (p. 19) that allow you to access hidden wisdom. By working with nature and journeying, you may potentially recognize parts of your story that your conscious mind does not perceive, and discover new stories for your life that allow you to feel connected to Source (p. 19).

The book’s contents include a foreword by Alberto Villoldo, PhD, author of *Shaman, Healer, Sage*. Carl studied with Alberto and eventually joined his teaching staff. He adapted Alberto’s sacred space invocation and journeys to the lower and upper worlds for use in this book. The preface provides insight into Carl’s journey and then thirteen chapters walk you through the process. You begin with the transformative power of writing your story, then explore your current story and ways to write a new and better one, while understanding the energies that influence your story. There’s a chapter setting a foundation for shamanic practices, one for preparation, and another to journey and dialogue with guides and symbols. Readers learn how to work with the archetypal energies of death and initiation as well as with dreams and nature to manifest a new story. Ritual and ceremony are discussed along with writing new stories for society. The book ends



offering ways to live according to your new story. Within the text, Carl also provides anecdotal comments from people working with this process. Hearing about their experience grounds the work, and creates a sense of connection with humanity and the greater Source of energy that exists—a sense of, *I want to try that too*, comes to mind.

Journey to the Quiet

There is a set process when taking a shamanic journey. Carl suggests readers remain open to the unexpected. You can travel to many realms, each with its own “energies and information that can affect the body, mind, and soul” (p.117). A journey, Carl says, is a sacred undertaking. He recommends readers stay open to what they experience, to be fully present without imposing expectations, ideas, or images or over-analyzing the experience. “Simply witness what you experience” (p.117).

The journey begins with clearing sacred space, cleansing your energy field, and mindfully breathing to come to a place of calm and inward focus. Create your intention of what you want to work on and where you want to journey. Close your eyes, relax, breathe deeply. Begin. It ends with giving thanks, closing sacred space and taking time to be with the experience, and write down your thoughts and feelings so you can process them over time and begin to incorporate any messages or insights you received into your everyday life.

A New Journey

I faced the south, the west, the north and east. I read the invocation beginning on page 96 aloud and felt a deep sense of the sacred, sensed a unification with the wisdom of all that surrounded me. A peaceful relaxation followed. Yet, in the silence, thoughts ricocheted through my mind, rebounded off my breath and came back again. *Drumming*, I thought. Carl had mentioned it might be useful to journey with the sound of a drum or rattle in the background. I rifled through a stack of old CDs. I put on my headphones, covered myself with a blanket, lay on the carpet and breathed. The drumming carried me inward and outward. I was bathed in light.

A voice spoke to me, calmly. It was a voice of wisdom beyond knowledge itself, immersed in compassion and love. I saw a woman dancing. Lovely. Graceful. I've seen her before in visualizations; envious of her freedom, of her movement as I live in a tense, tight body. "You must dance in wind," the voice said. He spoke further. I kept repeating what he said. I



wanted to be present but felt driven to memorize his words. After several sentences he said, "Don't try to remember everything I said. Let go. You don't need to hold on. Just let it be. You must learn to let go." I watched the woman dance and felt muscles in my shoulders, my stomach, my jaw release. "Dance with the wind and you will be free." My journey lasted 14 minutes. It involved innocent giggles in the arms of a lover from many past lives ago. It involved a deep, immense sorrow and tears—the kind that involve sobs and belly convulsions. It involved messages of compassion and love and release—my invitation to be free, to dance with the wind. I still feel the experience as I write this, here and now.

In Conclusion

Carl Greer set his intention many years ago to meld shamanic practices with Jungian analysis and clinical psychology. The outcome of his vision, of his journey, of his experience culminated in this book. I have read it through once. I will read through it again, taking more time with some of the exercises, taking time to journey—weekly as Carl suggests. I want to explore the lower and higher realms, the matrix, and I want to