

The Birthing Process **by Lisa Marie Lindenschmidt**

In the Pagan tradition, Yule is the birthing time. The Goddess is great with child and is in labor to bring forth the Sun. The Winter Solstice also being the longest night of the year symbolizes that deep doubt and darkness that we can sometimes feel as we are going through our own birthing processes. And so, instead of mourning the fear and moaning over the pain, the Goddess encourages us to have hope and to celebrate this new birth, to create a welcoming home for this new child.

Yeah. Right.

You know, when I put my family's traditions in the context of this lovely story, it's easy to feel like the world will just fall into place. Hey, I remember when I gave birth. I wasn't thinking about celebrating and latch-hooking the welcome mat; I wanted this kid out! And I think that's how most of us approach change. We don't want to go through all the labor, all the pains, the gradual transitioning, the learning process. We don't want to enjoy the sites along the way; we want to just Be There.

The other day, Mo was relating a story to me about her views on spirituality. She ended it by saying, "I don't want a religion; I want a relationship." This was profound for me. She's been frustrated lately by the idea of boxing her religion – and I would wager her beliefs in general – into the one category of Paganism. We have both been beginning to feel that our views, our ethics, our principles for life are more encompassing. I think that Paganism being an Earth-centric philosophy and religion (some would argue that Paganism isn't a religion... but that's another article) still works for me on a lot of levels. The stories are beautifully symbolic and keep me grounded in the Wheel of the Year and the happenings of my internal and external environments. But Mo's point is well-taken: to be in relationship implies that the person has an intimate ongoing communication with whatever it is that person is calling Divine (or God or Goddess or whatever works best for you).

The idea of being in relationship with something means that you not only have to value the thing or person that you are in relationship with, but you also must value the process of that eternally-changing relationship. And let's admit it: this sucks. OK. Maybe not with all things. But I am thinking specifically of my relationships with food and money. And, of course, let's not forget about those relationships with people you can't change, like my sometimes angst-filled daughter and my oftentimes pig-headed husband! I'm kidding about the relationship with them sucking, but you get my point: being in relationship means that you have to consider the other party's opinions, input, influence. And this can be incredibly difficult – especially in relationships with inanimate objects like food or money.

So, where do we start with acknowledging relationship? How can we find peace with this sometimes painful process? Is it possible to recognize the path as a awe-inspiring, even a joy-riddled one?

The hard truth is that this whole process starts with you admitting that you have to stand where you are at all times. You have to start with saying, “OK. I am right here, right now. Now what is the best decision I can make? What does this relationship feel like right now? Where do I want it to go? How can I work with in order to get where I want?” And most importantly... you have to be willing to let go of outcome. This is the sucky part.

The part of the story that I like most about the Goddess giving birth to the Sun is this idea of faith: will the Sun return? Because the bottom line is that none of us really know for sure. The irony here is that most of us have more faith in the returning of the sun each day than we do in our relationships with people or finances. Can we put ourselves in a situation of unconditional trust in the Universe? Will we be taken care of? Will others reciprocate our love? Will we heal ourselves from our past? Will we make good choices around parenting our children? And will we be forgiven when we don't?

We are in relationship with everything around us. How can we nurture those relationships defines the benefits we get. I don't believe this is selfish. I believe this is a necessary part of thriving as a human being.

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