

[A Year of Living Shamanically](#)

Part 4: Beltane – passion and purification

What is Beltane about?

Beltane is the last of the Spring festivals. At Imbolc (February 1st), we see the beginnings of winter drawing to an end. Although it may still be cold and dark, the snowdrops and crocuses signal that spring is indeed on its way. It is a time for quiet reflection and planning for the new year. Then, at the spring equinox (March 20th/21st) the balance now tips from night to day, and we can now begin 'planting our seeds' and putting our plans into action. At Beltane (May 1st), we can really see winter has gone and spring is in full flow. The days are much warmer and longer; the blossom (and pollen) is out; the trees are bursting into leaf; people's spirits are lifted; baby animals are around. All around us, things are pulsating with new life. The seeds we sowed a few weeks can become young plants now. And now is a time to, flow with and celebrate, life and fertility.



The name Beltane comes from the Celtic god Bel, meaning the 'bright one', and the Gaelic word 'teine' meaning fire, giving the name 'bright fire'. Elementally, in terms of the medicine wheel (see Part 1 in this series of articles), we are moving from air to fire. This is the beginning of the time of the fire element, which will reach its peak in another six weeks at the summer solstice ('mid-summer', around 20th/21st June), and begin to give over to the water element at Lammass (August 1st). In Beltane we are at a point though where air and fire combine to form a heady mix. It may help to refer to the medicine wheel again to remind ourselves what this is a movement from, and what it is a movement towards...

From	To
East	South
spring	summer
6am	12am
air	fire
future	present
plans	action
considering	deciding
ideas	opinions
buds, shoots	leaves
childhood	young adulthood
self-reflection	self-esteem

Looking at this, we can see Beltane would be 9am (interestingly, industrialised culture is often (rightly) criticised for having alienated us from natural rhythms; however, in this instance, this is one of the things it seems to have got right in that 9am the time when we have to finally get going and start the work). Beltane is also the time between childhood and young adulthood – teenage, basically. This is a time when our hormones kick in, and we feel horny. This is an important part of Beltane energy. It is also a time when we often become full of opinions, although they are still ones that are impressionable and changeable and we are, in a sense, still testing them out. And we may develop a sense (again though, often still a fragile one) of our own power, and with that, an awareness of what we perceive holds us back and a desire to break free.

Working with Beltane energy.

Perhaps you do not not feel like an adolescent anymore. In which case Beltane invites you to reconnect with that energy again. If you are not a teenager, what *would* be good to bring back about that energy? This isn't to suggest an irresponsible mid-life crisis! But often mid-life crisis (and the fear and resentment of the young that some people descend into as they get older) is often *because* we lost touch with the positive qualities of youthful energy. Maybe you found your teenage years hard. If so, from a shamanic point of view you may

have lost something (a soul part) that you need to reconnect with integrate into your adult self. Do you need to do a soul retrieval?

Being the first of the fire festivals, Beltane is all about purification and renewal. Fire burns away the old and makes space for the new. What do you want to really let go of in your life? You could make a list of things you want to leave behind and then, literally, burn it and deliberately let those things go.

Having let things go, what areas of your life needs renewal? There are two themes Beltane particularly invites us to look at here. These are relationships, and joy. Traditionally Beltane was a time of hand-fasting; of making a commitment to a partner. You may already have a partner. But unlike the Christian marriage ceremony, hand-fasting was something that was often re-done, with the idea in mind of renewal and re-energizing, maybe even each year. Do you need to put some time, energy and romance into your relationship? A romantic date; a weekend away. Or your relationships generally, with friends, children, family; have you been taking these other relationships for granted? Are they a bit stale? Is it time to re-invest and put some energy in?



Thinking about your life more generally; fire can bring passion, joy, enjoyment, spontaneity, enthusiasm, fun. Do you need to bring more of these qualities into your life? What would energise and re-energize you? Do you need to take up a new hobby (or re-start an old one)? Do you need to work less and have more play time? What would be fun to do? What is it that is getting in the way of you having fun and sapping your energy, and which needs to be cast into the Beltane fire? You could start by sitting down and brainstorming a list (air) of things that would be fun to do, and then (fire) actually acting on it!

Shamanic work.

Some good things to do at this time are shamanic journeys to meet and connect with young animals – foals, calves, gamboling lambs etc. If you have issues with the fire element, you could journey for help on that, and maybe to befriend your fire 'dragon' and cultivate that energy as an ally. You may in your journey literally meet Fire Dragon. Dragons often symbolise guardians to energies and parts of ourselves that we have shut away, to get through difficult times and situations. The dragon may initially appear as a fearsome adversary, but in reality they are often an ally in disguise, and keepers of the lost parts of ourself.



Also great to work with at this time of year is the energy of Phoenix, which is about: *Transformation; renewal and rebirth. Overcoming impossible odds. Burning off of the past. Rising from the ashes. New life from the old. Refreshing and purification. Rebirth. Cleansing energy of fire. Spiritual growth and regeneration.*

If you have been following the earlier articles in this series, and working with goal setting, now is also a time of course to do a review, and set your next six-week goals, leading up to the summer solstice (June 21st).

Other energies that can help with this time of year and which are worth seeking out in journeys include things like: the playfulness and inquisitiveness of Otter; the sense of freedom and free-spiritedness of Horse; the sense of abundance and fecundity of Rabbit. Honeybee can help us reconnect with the sweetness of life, but also the motivation to get busy and go out and get it. The energy of Hawthorn (aka May Blossom) can be really helpful; herbally it is a heart tonic, and the flower essences is usually associated with renewal and refreshing the heart. It is also a time, like Samhain (Oct 31st) in six months time, when the doors to the other realms are said to be more open. In particular at Beltane, the realm of the nature spirits is easy to contact. This includes the spirits of flowers and trees, of waterfalls and woods. It also includes the realm of the fairies, dryads, elves, and their like, making Beltane a great time to journey with nature spirits.

Wishing you a joyful and abundant Beltane!

If you missed the previous articles in this series, they are available to download from [here](#).

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