

# [A Year of Living Shamanically](#)

## Part 2: Imbolc

The winter solstice (December 21<sup>st</sup>) is the longest night of the year. The Spring equinox (March 21<sup>st</sup>) represents the time when the day and the night are of equal length. Generally known as Imbolc (a Celtic term meaning 'of the womb'), February 1<sup>st</sup> lies halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. It represents a tipping point; a place of transition. Shamanism is always very interested in these 'between' places; the cracks between the worlds. To remind ourselves what Imbolc is a movement away from, and a movement towards...

From	To
North	East
winter	spring
midnight	dawn
earth	air
timeless	future
seeds	buds, shoots
old age	childhood
finishing	considering
conclusion	theory and ideas

So Imbolc is the tipping point between the winter and the movement towards spring. It reminds us that, although February can be a dark and cold month, winter is in fact receding and spring is on its way. It shows us that we are moving away from midnight, and that dawn is on its way. It also represents the movement from the earth element, and towards air. In earth, we are in a timeless place, a place of being drawn in on ourselves and waiting, like a seed; a place of inertia. This is not a place of new beginnings, but a place of endings; a time of finishing things off and drawing conclusions. It is a time when we need to face and let go of the old. What is coming is air: movement, new life and growth; birth and buds and shoots; new plans and ideas. But Imbolc shows us we are not there quite yet.

I did some research about new year resolutions. Apparently about 80% of all of them are broken by January 31<sup>st</sup>. If the resolution had something to do with health and fitness then 90% are broken by only January 15<sup>th</sup>! Obviously there are many reasons for this, but I do believe that this is partly due to us having lost touch with the natural rhythm of nature and the seasons,. We live out of sync with what is around us. January is not a time for fresh starts. Think about plants and trees. With only a tiny handful of exceptions, such as the snowdrop, for them this time of the year is a time of slumbering. For us, it is a time for completing and contemplation. Imbolc represents the beginning of a shift though. Spring is not here yet, and it is not a time to put new plans into action. However it is a time to prepare and plan. Imbolc is...



- the time just before the dawn
- a time of conception and gestation
- a time of turning away from the past, and looking to the future



- the time to consider the year ahead; to plan what you want to sow in the spring, and be harvesting later this year
- a time of preparation; brushing away the cobwebs of the old and getting ready for what is to come
- a time of potentials

Think of a gardener planning the garden for the year ahead. It is not yet a time for planting. Or a fisherman mending the nets, waiting for the winter storms to pass, and getting ready to sail in the spring. By working *with* the energy that is around us at this time of year, we can use this time to consciously decide what we want from the year ahead, and be ready to act in the spring.

## Some ideas

Plans usually work best if we have long-term plans, medium-term plans, and short-term plans, and when all three types are in harmony and pulling in the same direction. So...

- Think about how you would like your life to be in 5 years from now. It may be useful to go through the following: living situation; work; health; relationships; interests/skills/hobbies; emotionally; spiritually. Write your goals down. These are your long-term plans.
- *Then, in relation to each of these goals, come next winter, where do you want to be up to? At the end of the year, looking back, what do you want to have achieved? Write these things down.*
- *Now, in relation to these end of year goals, in six months time, at Lammas (August 1<sup>st</sup>), first of the harvests, what do you want to have achieved? What do you want to be moving on to at this time of the year. Again write this down.*
- *In relation to these six month goals, what do you need to do in six weeks time, at the spring equinox on March 21<sup>st</sup>? What steps do you want to have archived? Write this in your journal.*
- *So, in relation to this coming spring and your goals, is there anything you need to be doing now to get ready and prepare? Write a list.*

Some tips for goals...

- Set reasonable and realistic goals. Setting unrealistic goals is a form of self sabotage!
- Be as clear about them as you can. Really take time to envisage them (shamans know there is power in thought forms!).
- Break your goals down into small steps (the exercise above should help you do this).
- Think about how you may sabotage yourself. Then think of what you are going to do to find a way around that.
- Once you have clarified your goals, ask yourself, honestly and without judgment, what percentage is the likelihood of your achieving them. Unless you get close to 100% as an answer, you need to sit down in a friendly way and talk to the percentage of you that is resistant. Befriend the resistance! You may have some negotiating to do with parts of yourself. This may involve modifying the goals. Your chances of success are much higher if all of you is on board.
- Spend some time imagining yourself going through the year putting your goals into action. Shut your eyes and really envisage this, step by step. Notice what you feel and body responses – pay attention to these. Do they tell you that anything need adding or changing?
- Lastly, write your clarified goals down in a journal.

## Journeying

Imbolc can be an immensely powerful time to journey. Personally, I always look forward to Imbolc journeys with excitement. Some ideas about journeying...

- You could go to the lower world and/or the upper world to meet your kin, your tutelage spirits, and/or your power animal(s) to ask for help with your plans for the coming year. You may be given some messages, a power object to help, or even a new power animal or guide.
- You could journey to do an Imbolc healing and/or ritual, with the emphasis specifically on tuning in to the energy of this time of the year; of clearing out the old and preparing for the new; of conception and potential.
- You could do a middle world journey, envisioning the future and putting energy into it, by seeing yourself moving through the coming year putting your plans in action.
- You could journey to meet and dialogue with the bit of you that is resistant or may sabotage yourself, and see what needs to be done. It may be a lost soul part. It could be an adversary who could become a powerful ally. It might be a thought form that needs clearing out. Explore, with your power animal(s).



Please don't worry or feel like you have missed the boat if you don't get to do this on Imbolc itself. Any time over the coming days or even weeks will do! In any case, the medicine wheel is a wheel. It doesn't have a beginning or an end. So we can enter it at any point and pick up the process.

In the next article, I'll look at the spring equinox, what it means and how we can work with it shamanically.

Blessings to you.

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