

## **Foreword**

By Peter A. Levine

Author of *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*

We hold the mistaken notion that we have somehow “outgrown” our need for ritual. In fact, in our post-modern-technical society, it is just the reverse. ‘High-tech’ demands the balance of ‘high-touch.’ The great spiritual traditions are about re-connecting to wholeness through rituals and celebrations; they are vehicles for that journey. Though we as a secular society are deluged with information (much of it stimulating and useful), at the same time, we suffer from a paucity of wisdom and have the desire for more personal warmth, connection and engagement.

It is interesting that a branch of science—psychology—has led at least a few hardy pioneers full circle back to the realm that once belonged to religion, ritual, in order to answer the need for more personal connectivity with each other and the universe. I believe this to be an important step forward.

Michael Picucci, in *Ritual as Resource*, reveals ritual as a portal into the rich inner landscape of the true self, and how vital a resource it is in our modern lives. However, unlike in recent centuries, in which rituals have been set by hierarchal societies, we moderns need to participate directly in the creation of our own transformational experiences through ritual. The tranquil feelings of aliveness and ecstatic self-transcendence that make us fully human can also be accessed through ritual. This way they become enduring features of our existence. This book helps fill the gap between ourselves and the divine intelligence in the universe, and in the context of our time.

Picucci at first shows the reader how to develop basic rituals involving the body, and its awareness of “felt sense,” and the breath. This foundation is essential. Without access to the living, sensing, knowing body, spiritual experiences—no matter how exultant and transcendent—do not become part of who we are. Then, by breaking down ritual into its dynamic parts, including the special role played by the reptilian brain, Michael helps us to understand the very real and tangible power of prayer, in its various forms. He then weaves the idea of prayer as communication into the many rituals that follow. In addition, he provides schemas (open-ended models) that help us visualize our rituals and bring them into form. This includes intention, resource, and the curious observer.

*Ritual as Resource* presents a course of action in which everyday activities like breathing, community-building, health and personal hygiene, house- and car-hunting, going to work, playing, praying, and just growing up, might be imbued with greater spiritual meaning through the power of ritual.

Perhaps Michael’s most original and powerful contribution is in establishing rituals that help us transform trauma. While all of us have been traumatized at some time in our lives, we need not become victims of those events. Through the resources gathered in the

previous exercises, we can begin to harness and transform the primordial biological energies evoked in trauma. In doing this, we begin to become the potent master of our own destinies.

And then there are the inevitable challenges that meet us on our journeys through life. Loss, bereavement, separation, divorce, serious illness and injury all have the power to halt our forward movement. Again, with the strength and resilience developed through ritual, even these devastating occurrences can be woven into the rich tapestry of our lives, bringing us more depth, passion and power.

Dr. Picucci also leads the reader through relationship and erotic rituals to help restore connectivity on many levels and awaken the sensuous body. Finally, to complete his task, he introduces the art of dynamic linking, a ritual in itself, which helps individuals cohere with each other, while taking the healing community movement another important step forward.

This is a book to be read, meditated upon, and used as a resource for a life fully lived.

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