



Between The Worlds Patterns of Possibility Diana's Grove Mystery School

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The Hermit

Hermit: *One who withdraws from life in order to pray.* The hermit's spiritual discipline slowly left this descriptive definition until he became simply *one who withdraws.* These definitions are the dictionary's interpretation of the Hermit card, but who is this fellow in the archetypal journey? Who is this keeper of the ninth step in a pattern of twenty-two?



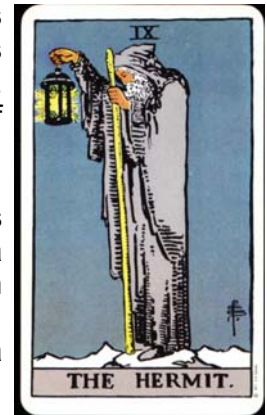
Nine - Completion, the whole that contains its parts. The hermit is a self-contained figure of contemplation. In many decks he is the wise old man who holds the lantern. White haired, white beard, often seen on a distant mountain top, he leans on his staff and illuminates the path to remote places.

The hermit's cave, the Baba Yaga's shack, those remote hideaways that welcome the unlikely apprentice who stumbles into her or his deepest mystery; the hermit is the symbol of the self we find when we are alone. Alone. No one to defer to, no one to blame. No one to answer to or to ask the answer of.... Completion. Contemplation.

In the Crowley Harris deck, the hermit is accompanied by Cerberus, that three headed dog that lurks at the crevice to the underworld. This dog protects the Freudian wonderland of our subconscious. He doesn't keep us out of our own depths, but he is the companion-monster we must face when we want to return to the world. Anyone can pass through the veil and take the journey down. Cerberus waits until you try to leave the darkness and the dream. As every Hermit knows, walking away is the easy part. Returning is the challenge. That is when we are called to use the Hermit's wisdom.

Complete, Completion, Complement...

Complement: *The act of filling up. The state or act of being complete. The full quantity of number needed. Complete - to bring to a state of entirety.* One to nine, complete defines the Hermit's role in this numerical pattern. If we then look at the hermit in the one to seven pattern of the labyrinth, her story becomes more complicated. As Justice is one, self, the Hermit takes his place as the second two. He lives in the rung of exchange. Exchange, pulsation, solitude, solitary...being alone is relative. Being alone is a pulsation, an exhale, an extension or a contraction. Alone - a response to and a preparation for being with others.



Two years ago, when writing the Shaman and the wolf story, I talked about soul, breath and pulsation. I talked about breath, that synonym for soul, as the essence of exchange. "Is soul the archetype, the original pattern, of breath? Is soul the myth that inspired heartbeat when heartbeat was young? Reach, return, reach, return. Reach, return. Shape in continual shift.

"If this is soul, then soul is exchange. Then, could it be that isolation is a sin but solitude is a prayer? Isolation has nothing to do with being alone. It has everything to do with refusing to touch life, with refusing to allow ourselves to be touched by life. If soul is a pulsation, then refusing to extend beyond the limits of our own perception, refusing to let our fingers entwine with sunlight, wind, the laces of a child's shoes, the fingers of a lover... that would be sin."

The hermit - solitude not solitary. Retreat so that we can return. The inner journey that enables us to be more fully with the world. The hermit, that light bearer and path maker, is the archetype of

the inner journey that I call *doing our own work*. The Wheel of Fortune completes the sentence so *I can be fully present in the great spin of life*.

Doing our own work

The Hermit leads us through the Minor Arcana.

One to nine, the four suits of the minor arcana tell the sequential story of living. The numbers indicate the increasing complexity of our adventure. Ace - A single idea, act, point of view or feeling is more complex when it is shared (two). A discussion, an exchange of ideas, is more complex than a statement. Agreement, the three, is even more complex than the discussion, the exchange. At times, a point of view is sacrificed. Ohh, the three - at times, the sacrificial

point of view is mine.

Four - Agreements must be nailed down and put into form and structure. Five, even our best plans don't work. On the numbers go, each one not a number at all but a shape, an increasingly complex shape. For those of you unfamiliar with the numerology, shapes and the Tarot, here is that pattern.

One - a point - self Two - the infinity symbol - exchange Three - a triangle - expansion Four - a square - form Five - a five pointed star - beyond form	Six - two triangles in perfect balance - resolution Seven - a square and a triangle - contrast Eight - an eight pointed star made from two squares - self Nine - a triangle realizing that it contains itself 3 times over - exchange Ten - a ten pointed star; two five pointed stars - expansion.
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As the Hermit knows, the more we interact, the more complex it gets. And then, suddenly, at nine, we realize that all that we thought was outside of us is really inside of us. So many pieces, to be with others, we need to be alone. Piece - peace...to make peace, we need to make whole.

That is how the numbers progress. They pulsate - one to nine and then ten - one step beyond whole, excess. Then ten to one...breathe yourself back into yourself. From exaggeration to completion, from completion to balance, balance to contrast, contrast to resolution...and on we go as we collapse into ourselves again.

That is the pattern, but what of the suits? In the 1800s, mystical societies began to gather the bones of psychology - psyche-ology...the study of

the soul. The Tarot was rediscovered, its deeper mysteries captured and told in pictures and in the order of the cards. Tarot's four suits magically matched the four corners of the Magician's square. They restated astrology's four elemental ways of being in the world. They gave form to the four personality types of the times, those models for understanding health, balance and basic personalities. It all fit because just as earth is the source of symbolic meaning, human behavior is the source of our metaphorical thinking about ourselves.

But before these four suits found their place in our magical patterns and took their place in our mystical societies, they spoke of our essential concerns. Spades - Swords: conflicts and alliances. Clubs - Wands: the integrity of servants, of those we share our world with.

Hearts - Cups: romance - issues of the heart.
 Diamonds - Disks: the results of our endeavors,
 the fruits of our labors.

The Tarot, psychology, magical arts, mystical work...we have all matured in the last hundred and fifty years. The tarot remains a container, ready to hold a thousand years of observations and a century of insights about human nature. Swords is still the nature of conflict. It is also the inner dialog that gives birth to conflict. Wands is now our integrity as servants, servants of our personal truths, servants of our individual philosophies. Cups - matters of the heart and...the mystery of emotion. Disks: the results of action and action itself.

The Hermit, nine, is the end of our first journey through the minor arcana. He is the one who holds up the light and asks us to begin the journey back into ourselves. From the point of his illumination, the Minor Arcana offers us a way to begin personal work by reintegrating those four journeys.

Swords - conflict, defense, verbal parrying, accusation and blame. When we exchange blame for self understanding and accusation for communication, we begin to do the Hermit's Minor Arcana work.

Wands - when we begin to be aware of intuition (instinctual knowing) and how it differs from projection, we take up the Hermit's light. When I begin to wonder about my beliefs rather than your motivations, I claim the Hermit's lamp of illumination.

Cups - when I begin to understand my emotions rather than attempt to manage yours, I have the hermit's work of filling myself from my own source.

And Disks - when I act within the boundaries of my own life, when I stand in my reality, I begin the journey back to the Ace, back to myself once again. The Hermit leads us back through the complex pattern of our own history to the Ace, the essence, of our essential selves.

My Favorite Places The Hummingbird Feeders

by Jane Holt

They come at the beginning of May or late April. I know they are coming and I am always delightfully surprised when the first one or two appear. We run around collecting feeders and sugar water, worried that those first arrivals must be exhausted and starving, wanting to make sure they stay. Almost always the males arrive first, their ruby throats a brilliant contrast to the neon greens of spring. They are the harbingers of summer. Its heat is close on their heels. I believe it follows them up from across the Gulf of Mexico. They just fly a little faster than the warm, languid southern air.

At the height of the summer we run seven or

eight hummingbird feeders at the house. I call it *run* because once the babies start to feed in late July or early August we fill those feeders two or three times a day. These little birds are insatiable and they truly keep us running. If the feeders are emptied before we notice, those tiny, fierce little beings hover, like a flock of tiny helicopters, staring in our windows. I can almost hear them calling, "Hey in there, wake up! You're shirking your job! You have work to do! Get out here! We're starving!" Tiny little speed machines; patience is not one of their virtues. We often have twelve or fifteen hummingbirds trying to feed off one feeder. In constant motion, they dart in when they see an opening, quickly retreating when a

more *important* hummingbird wants their spot.

Cynthia and Patricia started with one feeder and a couple of curious hummingbirds. Those birds stayed and had babies. The family returned the next year. They had more babies. The family returned again. And so it has gone, year after year. We have no idea how many hummingbirds spend the summer at the Grove. We know it is many. We know we go through a tremendous amount of sugar. We know we spend a lot of time cleaning feeders, filling them and putting them back out. We were very lucky this year; Margaret Gingrich from Seattle spent the summer with us. For two months she took tender care of the voracious herd. I don't think she ever let them run out of food.

Towards the end of August we begin to notice that the feeders don't need to be refilled quite as often, the packs around the feeders aren't quite as large. The hummingbird season has begun to slow down. Have some of them started south

already? That's my story, but I really don't know. Perhaps those young birds don't need as much food as they did when they were growing so quickly and perhaps they have started to migrate south. Gradually, throughout the month of September, we begin to take feeders in as the hummingbirds eat less and less. By the middle of September it is obvious that a large percentage of the flock has left. A few extra hardy ones hang around longer, sometimes into October. I suspect that a few of the weaker ones also stay; perhaps they instinctually know that they aren't going to make the migration over the Gulf of Mexico this year.

In the end it is just as in the beginning; one or two ruby throated males flying in the deep blue sky of autumn, their throats glistening in the sun. Then suddenly, one day, they are gone. I put the last humming bird feeder away. I know that one day next April or May, they or their brothers will just as suddenly reappear. Cycles within cycles.



Interview with a Mystery

Who can we interview for this Mystery School month? Which one of you is the Archetypal Hermit, the Inner Journeyer? Is the Hermit every hero who has ventured into the labyrinth? Is the Hermit's cave the center of every mystery? Are you the person Joseph Campbell was talking about when he said:

The labyrinth is thoroughly known;
we have only to follow the thread of the hero's path.

Where we thought to find an abomination,
we will find a God.

Where we have thought to slay another,
we will slay ourselves.

Where we have thought to travel outward,
we will come to the center of our own existence.

And where we thought to be alone,
we will be with all the world.

**This month, we want to interview you. We can't phone you all so...
So, please think back on the Mystery School work, and begin the harvest.**

What have you learned about yourself?

Was one of the Archetypes, the tarot cards or mythic characters, particularly potent or personally relevant for you?

Did an experience on-line lead you into deeper understanding of yourself or your role in community?

Did you have an experience at the Grove that you would like to share with the larger community?

What is the light that this year has given you?

What is the shadow that you find in that light?

What about your hero's journey would you like to share with the larger community?

In honor of the above quote and our mutual hero's journey...

Have you faced or slain any monsters in the labyrinth of the Mystery School year?

Has Divinity shown you a surprising face?

Finally - the Hermit's question. What does it mean... "Where you thought to be alone, you will discover you are one with the world."

Mysteries...as the cooling autumn weather and longer nights call us inside, we would love to hear your responses to the above questions. Write to us. Write to each other. Please post your answers on the Mystery email line.

Life As A Sacred Path - An Evolving Hermit

By Jane Holt

Once upon a time I wanted to be a Hermit. I wanted to slip away and find peace and quiet. I wanted to be beyond temptation's reach. I wanted to be beyond my fears of rejection. I wanted to have the self control that I thought hermits must have. I heard the story about one of the early Buddhist monks in China who meditated in a cave for 12 years. I thought staring at a cave wall for 12 years sounded wonderful; no decisions, no mistakes, none of the confusions of relationships, none of the complications of living with others. It sounded very romantic. Just the thing for a bruised heart, I thought, just leave behind all the things that make my life difficult.

I imagined myself peacefully staring at a scenic waterfall or a particularly interesting rock wall, or perhaps walking down a quiet lane. The Hermit's life looked so idyllic, so peaceful, so free and unconflicted, so uncluttered. So why wasn't I feeling uncluttered and peaceful...? Even in my imagination I couldn't hold that idyllic picture long. My brain kept getting in the way, my thoughts kept intruding and interrupting my hermetic reverie. How could I possibly think all the deep and transformative thoughts that hermits were supposed to think, with *me* and my confusion around? How could I walk away from myself?

I can't, of course, and that is the problem. It turns out that being a hermit isn't easy or idyllic. And, now, when I think about it, I realize that my reasons for wanting to be a hermit don't make any sense at all. It isn't the aloneness I want, it is the fear of rejection that I don't want. It isn't that I want my world peaceful, as much as I want peace within myself. It's not freedom that I want, as much as I want to be able to trust myself to choose for myself. It isn't really unclutteredness I'm looking for, but rather the ability to live smoothly with all of life's confusions and complexities. I don't really

want to walk away from the world, I want a sense of belonging to it, and even more, a sense of belonging to a specific part of it. I don't want to care less, I want to care more.

As I remember the second half of the story about that Buddhist monk, he came out of his cave after twelve years and saw that Buddhism in China was about to disappear. The monks had developed a practice of very little physical activity and had become physically weak and defenseless. Thieves and outlaws preyed on them. My *hero monk* had learned that he needed to keep himself very fit in order to meditate as long as he wanted. He taught the other monks exercises to stay fit, and ways to protect both themselves and their followers.

I forget that part of the story when I romanticize withdrawal. I have started thinking about all the Hermits who withdrew in order to return; from Jesus to Buckminster Fuller. Now when I invoke The Hermit, I am invoking him not because I want to disappear or become lost, not because I want to step away from the world, but because I want to step more fully into the world. Those hermit-like journeys inward give me the self knowledge that is necessary to be in healthy relationships. I invoke the Hermit to help me hold my light higher so that I can see deeper. I invoke the Hermit to support me, as I make this journey of seeking alone. What I find within myself, honest self knowledge, will make me fully present to myself, and whole. That wholeness will allow me to be fully present to my world, to each person and experience. That wholeness will allow me to be fully present and supportive of my community. I invoke the Hermit so that I can step away, in order to return more whole. Now, I invoke the Hermit in order to be in relationship.

Virgo and The Hermit's Journey

by Teri Parsley Starnes

For me, synchronicity can make life worth living. I love it when streams of time intersect in meaningful coincidence. When it happens I feel connected to a greater whole; I remember Mystery; my sense of adventure is activated. Such a conjunction of time streams is happening in September with our focus on The Hermit and the movements of several planets. The Hermit corresponds to the sign Virgo and there is a lot of Virgo emphasis during the month of September this year. Mid-August through mid-September is when the Sun travels through Virgo every year. Venus will be in Virgo until September 16. As the month begins, Mercury will be moving retrograde in Virgo, spending an extra long time in this sign, not leaving until October 8. Jupiter, bringing expansion and potency, will be just beginning its year-long Virgo transit. To make these transits more interesting, other mutable signs are in action this month too. Mars and Uranus are in the early degrees of Pisces, the sign opposite Virgo, and Pluto is in Sagittarius, squaring both Virgo and Pisces. The gods are talking this month, and I believe The Hermit may give us a clue about how to listen and integrate what they are saying.

Here is my pattern that I identify with Virgo energy. Right now as I write, Mercury is stationing retrograde in Virgo and Jupiter is about to enter it. Today is also the Virgo New Moon. All these heavenly coincidences remind me of my attitudes toward perfection. As I sit down to write, I look at the big pile of papers on my desk and say to myself, I can't think with this disarray in front of me. I'll just organize them first and then I can write. I pick up the first piece of paper and think in order to put this away I will have to create a file; in order to create a file, I'll need to reorganize my filing cabinet; in order to reorganize my filing cabinet I'll have to spend some time thinking about how I use my files and how I can best organize my files in order to remember just where I put that file...I'm sure you get the picture. Now my stomach is in knots and I'm sure I will never get this article written. With a deep breath and a chuckle at myself, I realize that focusing on my

disorder is just another avoidance behavior of mine, and perfection can exist in every moment, if I let it. The word "perfection" and the sign Virgo have a love/hate relationship with each other. This month, I plan on thinking about my own love/hate relationship with perfection too, even though I don't have any planets in Virgo.

Perfectionism is the bad news about Virgo, however there are many things to admire about this sign. Virgo, the largest constellation of the zodiac, is usually portrayed as a woman holding a palm branch in one hand and a sheaf of corn in the other. Many goddesses have been assigned to this constellation - Astarte, Persephone, Demeter, Isis and Astrea to name a few. The brightest star in the constellation is Spica. As the other stars are fairly dim, Spica shines beautifully alone, much like the lamp that The Hermit carries into the night.

Virgo is ruled by the planet Mercury. It is easy to think of the quicksilver messenger god as ruling Gemini, and quite another thing to think of him ruling the earth sign, Virgo. Talk about personality change. As the ruler of Virgo, Mercury reminds us of his hermit quality. Before Mercury was depicted as the youthful god with wings on his heels, he was seen as an old man, with a walking stick and traveler's cape. Although I am tempted to say that the word Hermes (Greek form of Mercury) and the word hermit are related, my dictionary says they are not. However Hermes is related to "hermetic" which means "isolated, sealed off," and so, the idea of retreating, or separating oneself from society arises from this god and this sign, another connection to The Hermit.

Virgo is the Virgin. Although some say this gives a prudish quality to those with this sign, that really is not the case. Virgo demonstrates the quality of purity as the source of renewal. From the strength of purity arises the power of sovereignty. I imagine that one of the highest expressions of Virgo is not that we are blemished but that we

have the power to renew ourselves again and again. Can The Hermit's journey lead us into this state of grace?

Other Virgo concerns are daily practice, work, service, apprenticeship, discernment, and, health and healing. Virgo reminds us that we all need meaningful work that we can dedicate ourselves to. While Jupiter transits this sign for the next year, the issue of work and service may come up for all of us. In the card, the Hermit is heading into darkness but he carries a light. Perhaps this light is our true work, or perhaps it is something else. What does the light represent for you? This year, we may find out. During this Virgo year we may find ourselves more interested in healing. The mind and body are both emphasized in Virgo. Ruled by the mental energy of Mercury, Virgo can be quite cerebral, but as an earth sign, Virgo can also be caught up in the minutia of things and time. During this Virgo year, we might have the opportunity to notice how we split our bodies and minds, and how we can integrate them. How can the lessons of the Hermit help us here?

Both Virgo and the 6th house are about daily order and practice. I am intrigued by the idea of looking at my 6th house to see how I approach my personal practices. Here are the clues. The sign on the cusp (the beginning line) of my 6th house is Taurus. Taurus is ruled by Venus, so I look at that planet in my chart. I see that she is in dreamy Pisces. Then I look at what aspects Venus is making to other planets. These are pretty good, a trine (harmonious) to both Saturn (structure)

and Jupiter/Uranus (these planets are conjunct bringing a need for expansion and freedom). So dreams, structure, and freedom play a role in what I need in my personal daily practice. On the plus side, my daily practice can bring me inspiration and transcendence; on the negative side, I tend to wait until I am inspired before I begin my practice. Perhaps if I realize, as I step into my daily practices, inspiration will greet me there, then I can be more consistent in my practice. Another factor in my 6th house is the presence of a planet. I have Mars in Gemini in the 6th. Mars adds an impatience for perfection and mastery, I think. But I can also see this Mars as adding energy if I choose to take it. I offer this exercise of looking at my 6th house as an invitation for you to look at yours too if it interests you.

The steps are:

What is the sign on the cusp of the 6th house?

What planet rules that sign?

What is the story of that planet?

What is the sign of that planet?

What aspects are made to that planet which rules the 6th house?

Are there any planets in the 6th house to add to the story?

Using these steps there are many possible ways to tell the story of your 6th house. Which story comes to you? Perhaps that is the story to follow a ways on your Hermit's journey.

Planetary rulers

Aries - Mars Taurus - Venus Gemini - Mercury Cancer - Moon Leo -
Sun Virgo - Mercury Libra - Venus Scorpio - Pluto Sagittarius -
Jupiter Capricorn - Saturn Aquarius - Uranus Pisces - Neptune

Skippy Speaks

How The Hermit gave Cerberus a PR make over

Whew! As some of you may know, Skipphooly and I have been out seeking Justice...the whole month of August we've been tracking her down. Some people thought I had been on vacation...humph! Some vacation. I don't think I work this hard at the Grove and, of course, I had to trot my way back each time there was an event. I mean, how could anything of any importance happen at Diana's Grove without me?

Skipphooly apologizes for dragging me off, but she really needed my help this time. Skipphooly is supposed to keep track of the archetypes that like to wander off. See, not only does she keep all of you on your path, but she also makes sure there is a path with archetypes on it for you to walk. I have to admit Skipphooly works almost as hard as I do. And, sometimes she just has to take a nap. Well, that was when Justice decided to take a walk...more like a walk-about if you ask me. That Goddess sure covers a lot of ground. She must be part hound or beagle. She lead Skipphooly and I on a merry chase. Personally, I suspect it was a nefarious plot to get all you Mysteries to see whether you could find her yourselves. I hope you have better luck than we did. Skipphooly and I saw signs of her here and there...sometimes we just missed her by minutes.

But we never found her, only hints and pieces. No, we never found her out there...we found her waiting for us when we got home! Oh, so calm and composed, balancing there as if she didn't have a concern in the world. Personally, I have trouble dealing with those well-balanced types. I keep worrying that they are going to fall over and I'm going to have to prop them. I'm happy that Justice is Skipphooly's concern. I wish her well with that elusive and wise old Titan.

Me, I'm far more impressed with The Hermit's dog. Now that is an impressive dog! Three heads, wow! Skipphooly says that Cerberus is really a pussy cat. Most of his ferociousness is the product of a good public relations campaign.

Actually, the story goes that when Cerberus was a puppy...yeah, he must have been a puppy once upon a time...he was very tiny; the runt of his litter, and he was a bit odd...he had three heads. His siblings, on the other hand, were blood thirsty, huge and, while they may have only had one head, you definitely didn't want to meet any of them anywhere, let alone a dark alley. When those puppies grew up they all got fine, impressive jobs; guarding the Colossus of Rhodes, patrolling the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, keeping thieves away from the Great Pyramid of Giza. There were, however, only Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and there were eight puppies.

Besides, that last puppy wasn't a bit like his siblings. He had three heads and they loved to talk with each other. Each head was bright and articulate. Each head had a personality all its own. And they liked each other. Their favorite pastime was to hold debates together. Two heads would debate and the third would decide which one did the best job of presenting its case. Cerberus's heads had real talent. Unfortunately, no one in the ancient world was looking for a debating, three-headed dog.

In the end they decided that they should just take themselves off. They wandered all the lonely places, talking to themselves. Gradually they started to run out of things to talk about. For three bright heads this was an awful fate. Meditating was out of the question, chanting even a worse option, since two of them can't hold a tune. They were dreadfully bored. Even the Hermit Crab they stumbled across one day wasn't very interesting. He had been a hermit even longer than they had.

No one knows whether Zeus took pity on Cerberus or he simply needed a really unusual gift for Persephone and Hades' wedding. Either way Zeus arranged for Cerberus and a very wise hermit to meet. This particular hermit was the master of regeneration. He knew how to re-new, re-story and re-create. I suspect he's the

archetype for spin doctors, personal PR managers and the like. I mean, how many times have you seen something or someone disappear completely for days or months and then reappear in an entirely new guise? That's what the Hermit did for Cerberus. He concocted a new life story that impressed everyone. The story went that Cerberus had gone out into the desert to battle his greatest fears and, in winning that battle, he had become the fiercest of fierce animals. With his three ferocious and very clever heads he was unbeatable, even the world's greatest human champions wouldn't be able to best what Cerberus had become.

The long and the short of it was that this new persona fit Cerberus perfectly. No one cared if he had three heads and no one wanted to find out whether the stories about him were true. Zeus asked Cerberus whether he could give him to Persephone for a wedding present. Cerberus was overjoyed. Persephone and Hades were great conversationalists and Hades especially never talked about trivial stuff. Best of all, Cerberus gets to talk with every soul on its way to the Under World. Those heads haven't had a boring day since that fateful meeting with The Hermit. Me, I think the story of Cerberus would make a great movie. Just think, three Skippy heads all talking at once! Yeah....

By the way - we have lots of other dogs at the Grove and we are actively looking for good homes for a few of them. We will have a web page up soon devoted to the dogs. So check the web site for more information and some photos of some of the "hounds" of Diana's Grove.

www.dianasgrove.com

Self Care Contracts

Catherine Gronlund

Taking responsibility for transforming my wounds

"The Hermit is the lantern-bearer, the way-shower and the wise leader who draws on internal wisdom and life's experiences as valuable resources for assisting others through life's processes." Angeles Arrien

Self Care Contracts are agreements I make with myself. They are designed to increase my awareness of ineffective attitudes, beliefs and behaviors so that I can work to change them. These agreements have consequences. If I break

any part of this contract, I agree to examine myself and take corrective action.

In real life, this process can be a pain in the #\$\$%^.

Two weeks ago, I accidentally stabbed my foot with the kickstand of my bicycle (with the full weight of the bicycle and saddle bags behind the impact). This created an enormous bump/bruise and it looked broken (fortunately, it wasn't).

I broke one of my self care contracts by having

this accident: "I do not kill or harm myself or others, nor do I provoke others to harm me accidentally or on purpose. I stay safe and honor the safety of others."

So what? It was just an accident. It doesn't mean anything. I hadn't had my coffee that morning. I was busy. I just didn't think.

Accountability work helps me move out of powerlessness (it was just an accident) and into choice. First, I admit that I broke the contract, "I do not hurt myself," by dropping my bike and impaling my foot with the kick stand.

Next, I examine what was happening at the time that could have contributed to this injury. I remember being angry with my boss and obsessing over something he had done the previous day. I was careless handling the bicycle, literally taking my anger out on the bike. I didn't drop the bike; I slammed it down, stabbing my foot with the kickstand.

Looking deeper, I wonder what was behind my choice to slam the bike down? Why was I obsessing over this in my mind instead of speaking directly to the person I was angry with? Is this a behavioral pattern from my past? What do I think will happen if I get angry with an authority figure (father, boss)? Perhaps I have been avoiding direct communication because I think it is not safe to be angry?

These questions are designed to elicit archaic beliefs that no longer serve me. Once I identify my mistaken beliefs, change is possible. I can identify the actions I will take to prevent this in the future and get support to do some therapeutic work to address the underlying issue.

What did I learn? That obsessing about a problem does not contribute to the solution and it is not healthy for me, physically or emotionally. With this expanded understanding and consciousness, I can make better choices the next time I get mad, using this energy for me and

not against me. The full text of the Self Care Contracts and Accountability Work are outlined below.

Self Care Contracts

*Adapted from the Group Therapy Contract,
Elaine Childs-Gowell, PHD*

- I do not kill or harm myself or others, nor do I provoke others to harm me accidentally or on purpose. I stay safe and honor the safety of others.
- I do not run away, physically or emotionally, or engage in running behaviors. I stay and work through my problems.
- I do not get sick or go crazy to avoid problems. I stay sane and healthy.
- I am not sneaky nor do I lie or steal. I am honest and congruent in thoughts and feelings.
- I am not passive, I am proactive and confront passivity in myself and others and accept their confrontation of my passivity.

Accountability Work

*Adapted from Regression and Protection,
Elaine Childs-Gowell, PHD*

- Identify the contract I broke.
- Identify how I broke it.
- Identify the mistaken belief.
- Identify how I will challenge this belief and keep from breaking this contract again.
 - The adult actions I will take to correct this behavior
 - Therapeutic work I will do to challenge my mistaken belief
- Describe what I learned.