

BODY RITUALS

Holy reverence for the temple

The bible and other religious books liken your body to a temple, and suggests you treat it as sacred and with utmost reverence and respect.

Some of you however may show more “reverence” and have more time for your TV, computer, car, job or even your house than for yourself and your body. More often than not these material possessions or occupiers of your time are mind-numbing activities, ones that have you being “couch potato” and ones that emphasise machinery, technology and activity more than sacredness, reverence and enjoyment of your body.

How often do you give someone else a facial or a pamper session for their birthday or Christmas present and would never give one to yourself? How often do you give yourselves flowers? How often do you draw up a lovely bath and take 30 minutes to simply relax? How are you going to pamper yourself today, tomorrow, this week, this month and this year?

Because your body, your health and self esteem are so interconnected, when you participate in regular body rituals and show your body you see it as sacred, you get more in touch with yourself, you acknowledge yourself for your greatness, and your body responds in kind. It just thrives on these gifts and acknowledgements.

The Inside-out and top to toe principle – the “temple” make-over

Imagine the Sacre Couer in Paris or the Taj Mahal in India. Can you imagine looking at their brilliance on the outside and then walking inside to something which was unkempt, dirty and in disarray or seeing a pristine church or temple from the inside, which lacked appeal on the outside? Attending to the inside and the outside appearance and ambience are equally important for your own temple – your body. The love principles (listen to, observe, validate and enjoy your body) are in essence an inside-out principle.

How about the **top to toe principle**? This relates to the chakra or energy centres that you have beginning with your crown (top) and going down to your base. (toe)

Let me suggest some body rituals under each of those energy centres that you might wish to try. You may know what energy centre you would like to energise. Great! Create a body ritual for that area or you may wish to do intuitively what feels right.

Energy centred rituals

Crown Wear something purple, meditate holding an amethyst or clear quartz crystal, have a head massage, as you brush your hair, be grateful for something, feel the water in the shower touching your head and notice every drop, wear your favourite hat, get a new haircut...

Third Eye Wear indigo, sit in silence, go within and journal your observations, sit in a church or temple, eat a wholesome, natural diet, notice synchronicities, get a good night's rest, record your dreams, make a symbols table or sacred space, pray, pull a tarot or oracle card, wear a crystal or have one on your desk, eat blueberries or other purple fruit or blend them into a refreshing drink

Throat Wear blue, speak out your affirmations, sing, chant a mantra, listen to music and dance, speak kindly to yourself and your body, wear your favourite necklace, gargle, make yourself a tasty drink, develop your intuition, have a psychic reading, read an inspiring book, pay attention to your tone and volume of voice

Heart Wear green or pink, look at yourself lovingly in a mirror, forgive someone or ask for forgiveness, wear a new bra or shirt, do a breast check, massage, body gratitude meditation, write a card appreciating someone, hug yourself or someone else, read emotional poetry out-loud, laugh, cuddle an animal, buy something you love, have a healing session, write yourself an “I love you” note, volunteer to do something for someone...

Solar Plexus Wear yellow, hold a heated wheat-bag or hot water bottle, tummy rub, belly dancing, side-bends, pilates, sun salutation yoga posture, good nutritious meal, focussed breathing, meditation, say “no” to something that you would normally do, watch something funny and belly-laugh, do something out of your comfort zone, attend to your posture, do sit ups, look at the sunrise or sunset, sunbathe, kick-boxing, pick flowers eg sunflowers

Sacral / sexual Wear orange, any creative, romantic, sensual or sexual activity, paint, take photos, enjoy a hobby, bake a cake or a four course meal, slow dancing, wild dancing, belly dancing, sensual massage, sensual aromatherapy, masturbation, laugh, cry and be emotional, have a pamper with a friend, candles, bath with flowers or oils in it, playful spontaneous activity, eat something decadent, try on new lingerie, love-making...

Base Wear red, paint toenails, enjoy warmth on feet, foot bath, walk in barefoot, dance, foot and leg massage, work in the garden, pick fresh fruit and vegetables and eat them, leg kicks, ankle circles, shave and moisturise legs, put on a nice pair of shoes, wear your slippers or bed socks, walk along a beach or through nature, listen to the birds, sit around a fire...

Temple festivities and Seasonal body rituals

All religions have certain seasonal festivities that are highly regarded and often occur in the church, temple or mosque – their religious “body” or sacred place.

Take time to connect with the seasons and create seasonal body rituals and pampers to nourish, pleasure, acknowledge, validate and be grateful to your body!

Summer for me is about holidays, warmth, beach, camping, bike riding and the outdoors. Autumn reminds me of the leaves and orange, greens and browns of the leaves in the park, mild days and mild nights. Winter, for me as a child provides memories of snow, gloves and frosty mornings and a time to hibernate, read and cuddle up on the couch. Spring is my birth month. Things start anew for me personally, but also things in nature are born or come to life. Spring is colourful and a time of fresh blossoms.

For me the seasons gift me their wisdom and their unique qualities.

Summer – energising, warming, friendships, vitality

Autumn – letting go, releasing, debriding, getting rid of stuff, decluttering, simplifying

Winter – hibernating, resting, recuperating, pondering and reflecting, comfort

Spring – renewing, revitalising, starting anew, refreshing

Reflecting on your own memories, connotations and deeper wisdom of the different seasons, how will you relate to your body differently this coming year? What rituals can you incorporate into those seasons?

A different take on seasons

“Season” does not necessarily just refer to the climatic seasons of Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer. It might also be daily, weekly, lunar, monthly, or even annual “seasons” or other special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries or other days that are special or significant.

I love doing a top-to-tail makeover once a week, when I pluck my eyebrows, rub the dead skin off my feet, give my face a great cleanse, tone and moisturise, remove some body hair, deep-condition my hair and moisturise my body all over.

On my children’s birthday I also see this as my “birthing” day and on this day I sit and reflect on the extraordinary experience of giving birth and on the wonders of my female form. I give thanks for the wonder of conception, pregnancy, giving birth and breastfeeding.

I am not a great clothes shopper but once or twice a year I might go out and do some retail therapy – remembering not to just buy anything, but to buy clothes that really suit me, feel good on me and accentuate my lovely body. I make this an opportunity to try on different styles, I see and appreciate my body every time I put on and take off another piece of clothing and see myself in the mirror, and I really make a point of feeling sensual as I appreciate the textures, colours and shapes of the clothes I try on and the way that the garments make me feel.

Body rituals basics

- Be still and enjoy the sacredness and reverence of what you are doing
- It is not just the activity for activity’s sake. It is more about doing them mindfully.
- Reduce your distractions and clutter and focus wholly on the experience
- Use all of your senses and magnify them
- Be grateful for your body and be in awe of who you are
- Connect with and experience the ritual in your body
- Enjoy some body rituals for yourself. On other occasions, do it for, and with others.
- Have fun.

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