



you are the storm

Please note that I use feminine pronouns throughout, but I am addressing you, whatever your gender.

The Art Witch Primer that you received in March ended with the words "I am the storm." This is one of my favourite quotes, and it's a fantastic piece of journal fodder. I worked with it back in 2015 when I was in the thick of grief - a grief that kept whispering to me about my powerlessness, my inability to withstand the storm. Seeing myself *as* the storm was a very potent piece of magic that helped me navigate that period in my life.

One of the things that happens when we embark on a spiritual course of study, is that things get stormy. This is an important part of any new endeavour because it tests your mettle, and points the way to what needs to be cleared in order to become your best self. You will be asked to examine things. You will be asked to let go of things. You will be asked to face your shadow. You will be asked to come out of denial. This is an initiation period, and it separates the priestess from the lay person. If you're not willing to do your work, you will get stuck. You may even cause harm, or be harmed in the process. Best case scenario, the work doesn't work for you, and you spend your life dependent on others to define the sacred for you. Worst case scenario, the work starts to work you in unexpected ways that may be unduly painful.

Example: You pick a deity to work with, maybe based on a quiz, or because someone you know works with that deity, but you don't do the work it takes to truly understanding who that deity is and what they stand for. You are attracted to them because they are 'sexy' or 'popular'. You erect a gorgeous shrine to this energy without knowing what is actually appropriate to put on it. You bypass uncomfortable feelings by maintaining a 'love and light' attitude. The deity you picked (whether you believe in actual deities or archetypal energies, which in my opinion and experience are equally powerful) might prefer specific forms of devotion or ceremony. They might demand certain sacrifices from their devotees, but you don't know that because you didn't do your homework. Worst case scenario, a drama starts to play out within you and around you, and whether you like it or not, whether you wanted it to or not, shadow associated with that deity arises. You get a spiritual smack down. Best case scenario, your work just doesn't work. It's just window dressing, a bit of fluffy theater with no real impact or meaning.

The truth is, though, even if you ARE doing the work, and doing it devotedly and well, **storming will happen.** This is soul work. It isn't always going to be pretty, light, fun, or easy. You can't do deep work and expect everything to be sunshine and roses. You contain multitudes and some of them are going to be hard to deal with. If all you want out of this or any other course of study, is to make pretty art, and avoid internal conflict, don't do the work. Just paint, and leave the work alone. **You have my permission to cherry pick this content.** Because, here's the thing I really want you to know and grapple with: **the work will bring storms.** It will also bring clarity, deep wisdom, joy, pleasure, a sense of self-possession, all the beneficial side of effects of practice, like occasional moments of deep serenity, knowing your own business, being in alignment with your values, and the absolutely soul stirring serendipity that seems to come with doing the work. You'll also get an unending stream of inspiration, and a body of work to show for your devotion. You will make some of your dreams come true. You will realize some of your goals.

so what happens when it storms?

You can quit. Or you can rise. It's up to you. I choose to rise, and rising means I work with whatever is coming up, investigate, explore, dig in, try to figure it out, tweak, adjust, adapt and overcome. If I have feelings about something, I attend those feelings rather than numbing them. If I catch myself numbing them, I course correct. As a witch, I recognize the power inherent in my emotional states, so instead of stuffing, or numbing my feelings, I channel them towards my desired outcomes. All of my feelings are up for grabs as 'energy' I can direct toward getting what I want.





that's empowerment.

Being with what is also builds resilience. Instead of being thrown for a loop whenever something arises, you learn to *deal*. Not by ignoring, bypassing, denying, running, or quitting, but by standing, both feet planted, eyes open, in the eye of the storm. When you do this, you build trust with yourself. You come to know that you can handle whatever comes at you. When you face the storm, you *become the storm*. You learn how to be in the eye of it without losing your footing or center of gravity.

let's talk about emotions.

Francesca DeGrandis says "A healthy witch makes all things sound." We explored this in the beginning of this program, when we looked at what we're doing here. We are making all things sound, starting with ourselves. Sometimes this looks like being 'as well as possible given the circumstances', and sometimes this means miraculous healing where we thought none was possible. I'm very familiar with the 'as well as possible' scenario, though I have had one or two of the miraculous variety, usually in the context of doing my work and finding the proverbial scales falling from my eyes, or a sudden eradication of a thing that was a huge thing just the day before.

This doesn't come from ignoring, bypassing, denial, or 'pulling up your boot straps'. It doesn't come from being nice, polite, civil, or faking it until you make it. It comes from self-inquiry, introspection, self-awareness, honesty, full expression of all that is true for you, and growing 'soundness' through doing the work.

For me, personal soundness requires that I be with all that is within me. I can't be 'sound' if I'm denying what is. Sitting with stuff is one of my superpowers, thanks to years of inner work and therapy. Bypassing is the 'norm', though, and it is culturally encouraged. "Don't feel. Don't cry. Don't be angry. Don't 'air your dirty laundry'. Don't talk. Don't tell. Don't get your stuff all over me. Don't make me face my own stuff by revealing yours. Stay quiet. Be nice. Cross your legs and shut your mouth. These are the messages we bump up against every day. We are instructed from childhood to hide behind a smile and an "I'm fine" in all but the most intimate of circumstances, and even there we can find ourselves unsafe to share what is really going on.

But, I bucked that conditioning long ago. I feel out loud. All the time. I say what is true for me as a matter of course. And the results of that have been that people see me, and feel not only empathy for what I'm going through, but *empathy for themselves in whatever they're going through*. [I CAN'T KEEP QUIET](#). (Hint: this is a powerful anthem all witches should have in their playlist).

Expressing your feelings is magic. It is a way to heal the world. It's a kind of Amazon Warrior thing, a radical subversion of the status quo. You tell me to shut up, and I'm going to talk louder. You tell me to take up less space, and I'm going to expand in all directions. This is a witch thing. You're going to find yourself doing the same. But there are a few things you should absolutely consider as you begin to make this shift (if you aren't already a fully fledged feeler).

this isn't always safe.

Expressing what is true for you can be dangerous. It can invite unwelcome feedback that often comes in the form of unsolicited advice or criticism. It can stir up envy in people who wish they could do what you're doing, and they may project that envy back onto you by trying to silence you or minimize you. You can experience a powerful sense of contraction after a vulnerable sharing (what I call a vulnerability hangover) that can leave you with paroxysms of anxiety. You might alienate people who simply can't understand where you're coming from. There are going to be spaces that are safer than others for your vulnerable sharing. Choose wisely, and as soon as you notice someone coming at your vulnerability with unsolicited advice or undue criticism, adjust your boundaries accordingly. For example: I put 'no advice' boundaries around some of my posts. I also move people who don't abide by these boundaries to my 'restricted' list, where they can only see my public posts and never any of my more personal stuff. In terms of 'meatspace' interactions, there are people in my life that I share my deepest darkest with because I know they will receive it with empathy, honesty, and kindness. And then there are those who get my shiny, polished smile, because they have proven not to be safe to share my deepest darkest with.

Some of us already have what I call 'casserole people'. These are the people who know you intimately and will show up with casserole or ice cream if you are in a bad place. They will help you bury the body. They can hold you while you are sobbing *without telling you to stop crying*. I'm lucky. I have these people, and believe me, I know how lucky I am.

If you aren't so lucky, fostering these kinds of relationships is an important part of your work, because we can't do any of this (and by this, I mean LIFE) alone. We need casserole people. We need 3 a.m. people. We need 'move the body' people. Finding them requires courage. It requires that you get outside of your comfort zone. Join clubs or networks. Get out there. And then, feed your new people tiny crumbs of true you. Watch carefully to see how they receive them. Note who makes you feel safe. Note who doesn't. Also make notes about who shares openly with you, since their open sharing is a good indicator that they are good with sharing real, true feelings and stories.



getting hurt builds resilience

Oh my gods, I know, this is awful, but it's true. When you put yourself in a vulnerable place, and you are ill-received, it will hurt. But you will dust yourself off, and try again, and you will be less hurt next time. I am speaking from experience here. This is a promise I am making. If you share your truth and you are rejected, abandoned, criticized, etc. well, that's just the universe helping you prune your garden. It doesn't mean it doesn't suck. It DOES suck, but what we often think of as 'abandoned' is really 'released' in disguise. I, personally, don't want people close to me who can't see me/feel me/hear me as I am. I don't want to have to be a living piece of theatre to accommodate my people. My people are okay with me when I'm the Goddess Of Never Not Broken On The Floor. They are also okay me when I'm Joan of Arc or Lagertha. All of my parts are welcome in the eyes of my real people, my true people. I let them have it all and they let me have their all. As for the rest? The unsafe ones? They get zero fucks given. They get the royal wave, the plastic smile, the 'Fine, thanks', until they prove they are worthy of more. No, this is not nice. But it fiercely self-loving, and besides, those unsafe people? They are only going to be triggered and upset by your awesomeness in the arena of vulnerable sharing, so cutting them off from that is actually a kindness. Go where the ease is. Go where the intimacy is. Go where you feel like you can ebb and flow like the tides without being 'fixed' or 'tidied up'. And be that for your people as well, by learning to 'feel with them' instead of trying to shush them, minimize them, advise them, or invalidate them.

anger is especially difficult to express or hold space for.

One of the reasons for that is because we women especially have been told all our lives that anger is NOT ACCEPTABLE. And yet, it is a safety mechanism that exists within us for a reason. It alerts us to the wrongness of a thing. It tells us when our boundaries are being violated. It is a nudge in the direction of our own inner work to sort 'anger about the past' from 'anger about this thing that just happened here and now'. Most of us have a lot of stored up anger - anger we've suppressed forever because we have never been taught how to process it in a 'sound' way. Female anger is often met with gaslighting, too, which makes us feel crazy, angrier, and unsafe.

*but anger is vital, and when women embrace their right to be angry,
they can move mountains.*

There is also this: anger suppressed and turned inward can cause depression. Depression is not sadness (which is healthy, and natural), but rather, a kind of self-annihilation. It interferes with our ability to feel the full range of human emotion. It has physical impacts which leech our vitality. 'Depressed' is the opposite of 'empowered'. Now, it is true that a lot of depression is a function of chemical imbalances in the brain, but I'm always curious to know how much trauma existed before the depressed state arose, and whether the depression is chemical *because* of trauma and the suppression of anger, or whether the depression is a byproduct of sheer chemical brain stuff. According to my therapist, trauma is often at the root of a lot of it, and unraveling trauma can unravel the vitalizing power of suppressed anger.

grief is equally problematic.

When we experience a loss, grief arises. We've been taught to think of it as a linear process, as something that starts at point A and moves toward resolution, but this isn't my experience with grief at all. Rather than a straight line through the five stages (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance), grief is more like a three-year-old's scribble. We move in and out and around the stages in a shape that looks rather more like a hurricane than a line. This process takes time, and while the 'experts' have given us time frames (rather like expected times of arrival at acceptance), each person grieves differently.

Depending on what we're grieving, we can also come up against some rather insidious societal expectations. Like, if someone hurts you and leaves you, you are supposed to strong enough to just 'get over it'. If you are betrayed, you are supposed to write the entire relationship off as a waste of time, and move on. This is not helpful. This doesn't let us properly grieve.

Being in the presence of a grieving person can be uncomfortable. It can mirror unresolved or unacknowledged grief within us. It can make us impatient with them. If we are grieving, we can be equally impatient with ourselves. People with unacknowledged or unresolved grief just want grieving people to stop grieving, to get over it, to move on, so they can feel more comfortable. When we come up against this in our own grieving process, we can begin to stuff the grief in order to make other people (or ourselves) comfortable. There is a backlash inherent in this, though. That grief, stuffed as it is, can arise at any moment and give us a swift, unexpected kick to the guts.

Moving through grief is a process. It takes as much time as it takes. Medicating it, denying it, suppressing it, only causes problems later. Embracing it, being with the process and letting it ride you for as long as it takes is the only healthy way through that I know of.



All that being said, I'm not a therapist, so I can't help with unraveling anger or grief, except to **listen** and **witness**, but I can verify the validity of that kind of work in our endeavour to make all things sound. We must begin this work with ourselves. As we become sound, as we begin to own and express all of what is true for us, we will come more and more into our own power, and as we come to know our power, **we will begin to know and own our work in the world.**

so, to sum up, all our emotions are fuel, are valid, and are fair game

There is nothing I feel that gets pushed aside if I can help it. It gets expressed. The joy, the gratitude, the love, the affection, the curiosity, the delight, the appreciation, and on the flip side of that coin, the anger, the frustration, the sorrow, the grief, the righteous rage, the uncertainty, the terror, the envy...

It's all energy. It's all valid. It's all a part of being a spiritual being in a meatsuit. Our emotions fire off in our brains. They just arise, and sometimes we know exactly why, and sometimes, we have no idea. But here's a radical idea about emotions: none of them are 'negative', bad, wrong, or unacceptable. What we do with our emotions can be destructive or constructive, but all of it is **power**, and how we direct it makes a difference between 'soundness' and 'unsoundness'. Expressing it in all the safe and healthy ways (using our words, using our pens, using our paint brushes, dancing it out, pillow punching, working out, etc.), especially if we intentionally direct the energy we are releasing towards our desires, is a hugely healing and powerful practice.

Example: I feel a deep sadness about being single. There is nothing wrong with feeling this way. It doesn't mean I'm needy or weak. It doesn't mean I am in any way wrong. I may need a good cry. I may need to listen to all the sad love songs, and let myself be with and then full release this sadness. When I release it, I may offer up the energy to the universe towards the attainment of my desire. Maybe I write a love letter to my future lover, filling it with all the longing in my bones, and then burn it as a way to send it off into the world to fetch my mate. Maybe I paint what it feels like to be happily shackled up with my best friend with the intention of setting a kind of psychic beacon so he can find me. Maybe I dance it out, and let the sensual energy flow through my body and out into the universe to act as a magnet for the one I am waiting for. Maybe I sit with a friend and unravel my longing with them, spiraling out and spiraling in again so I can understand what might be standing in my way. Maybe I blog about it so I can let it go for the moment and get on with my day.

Letting your emotions fuel your work this way is a way to lean in to discovering your strengths, your passions, your resilience, and your inner Amazon.

witches, even art witches, are warriors.

What I mean by warrior is this: as we come to know ourselves intimately, we begin to work (and in some cases fight) for the attainment or protection of what we desire and value. Some of us are joy warriors, some are kindness warriors, some are peace warriors, some are social justice warriors, some are environmental warriors, some are ancestral healing warriors. Some do battle by way of pen, paintbrush, music, poetry. Others do battle by way of volunteering, social activism, running for politics, or academia. Some quietly raise children imbued and infused with their values. Some just model their values as best they can.

Notice that in all cases, our 'warrior-ness' is directed at a particular overarching theme or cause. We aren't merely working for joy for ourselves, or kindness for ourselves, or peace for ourselves. No. We work for the greater good. Because, truly. What's the sense in having power if we aren't using it for the greater good? Rarely will you find a witch whose work is done solely for herself. They do exist, but you tend not to hear from them, because, well, they're about and for themselves. We are also about and for ourselves, but as we do the work, we become about and for other things, too, because we come to recognize that we are the microcosm reflecting the macrocosm and what is done in us and through us is done in the whole. Eventually, because we are wired for connection, because our clan, tribe, or community matters to us, our devotion leads us to some kind of **conviction**. **"This is the thing I am here to do. This is my work in the world."** This is where your warrior self arises.

your warrior self won't look like my warrior self.

Mine is a shield maiden and a queen. She creates communities and then staunchly, fiercely, boldly defends and protects them. Her values include honesty, loyalty, authenticity, and empathy for herself and others. Her main work is to be real, to be self-possessed, and to foster realness, and self-possession in others by creating the space for that. Her main arena of 'action' is in relationships, in communities. Her main role is teacher and facilitator, but she has eschewed the 'usual way of doing things' and has forged her own way. She's bad ass. She's charismatic. She's in your face. There's not much softness about her, but she's embodied, fierce in her convictions, and takes no prisoners. I like her. She serves me well, even when I sometimes wish she'd sit down and shut up, because she just can't resist stirring the pot.





Yours might wear a lab coat, and her domain may be the lab. Or the day care center, or the home, where you are mama bear warrior, soft with the babes, but fierce with any predator that might lurk in your domain. You may be the one knocking on doors to get the petition signed, or calling your senator. You may be the teacher who wars with ignorance every day and wins every time a student gets a thing. You may be the environmentalist, warring against the destruction of our planet. You may be the writer, warring against a life devoid of meaning. You may be the artist who imbues every painting with energy towards healing. You may be the doctor or nurse, the minister, or you may literally be a warrior in the army, navy, or air force, or involved with community safety programs. Animal rights might be your thing. Or the plight of the homeless. Or the plight of the oppressed. You may have several threads of 'warrior-ness' in you around multiple different convictions.

If you don't resonate with 'warrior' energy, try 'heroine' instead. Or 'protagonist' or 'superpower'. What are you the heroine of? What is your super power? If you were a protagonist in a story, what would that story be about? Are there myths or stories specific to your ancestry that include 'warrior goddesses'? Which do you resonate with? Here's a list that you might find helpful. Note that it is very incomplete, but a good session of GoogleFu should avail you many more names and stories to be inspired by.

if you were a storm, what would you reveal? what would you destroy? what would you make room for?

exercise: emotional power journaling

Check in with yourself with pen and paper in hand, and ask yourself the following questions:

What's happening in the world right now that makes you angry? What makes you feel full of sorrow? What makes you happy or full of joy?

Where does your emotional power (as in, the 'charge' you feel when you feel stuff) tend to direct itself? Inward? Outward? In the service of action to change? In self-denigration, or self-loathing?

How do you direct your emotional power? Do you yell? Throw tantrums? Contract? Hide out? Write? Scribble? Paint? Express full throatedly? Punch things? Run it off? Numb it out? Ignore it?

What are you really passionate about? (Aka what are your values?)

What are you really good at? What do you do well, naturally, without much thought? How can this be applied to your emotional energy? As in - how can you turn your skills into arenas of emotional release/using emotions to power change?

If your anger, sorrow, joy, or passion could change some part of the world or your environment, what part of the world or environment would you turn that emotional energy towards?

What parts of your art practice feel like good ways of channeling your emotional states for the greater good?

How intimate are you willing to be with your emotional states? What can you do to foster that intimacy?

Art Journal Prompt: Try mood journaling. [Here's a mini-workshop to try if you like \(\\$27\)](#)

exercise: emosymbols

Develop a set of symbols for all the things you generally feel on a regular basis. This can be included in your art journal spreads as 'code' for whatever is really going on with you. You can do Google searches using the words 'symbol for <insert emotional state here>', and build your own visual lexicon. Colour is also a great way to express emotions. Use magical correspondences as well as colour therapy tools and resources to research. Tarot is a fantastic tool for finding symbols/colours as they relate to emotional states and life passages. Example: Cups for all that watery heart stuff, Swords for all that airy mind stuff, Pentacles for all that earthy body stuff, and Wands for all that fiery spirit stuff like passion, ambition, creativity, and drive.

Art Journal Prompt: Pick an emotional state that you feel regularly. Research symbols, colours, etc. Try finding quotes, lyrics or poems that are relevant to that emotional state. Create a journal spread that expresses the emotion as honestly as possible. If you're feeling 'ugly' or 'difficult' feelings, embrace that. Express it. Be real.





exercise: from you all things emerge and unto you all things return

This is a ritual to befriend your emotions. Please apply liberally.

Begin in the usual way by setting the scene, settling yourself, grounding into earth and sky so that your energy is supplemented with the assistance and energy of the powers that be.

With pen and journal in hand, list all of the emotional states that you experience that you are totally okay with, that you totally own, and that you find easy to express and share.

Now, list all of the emotional states that you experience that you are uncomfortable with. Be aware that you might have equal discomfort with anger and joy or happiness and apathy. Happiness can be uncomfortable because omg, what if you lose it. Joy may trigger a similar fearful state. Anger may make you feel unsafe. Explore deeply. Leave no stone left unturned.

Once you have a list of all of your emotional states, light a candle and get quiet for a moment. Breathe slowly and gently. Let your eyes rest on the page of what you have written. Take in the first emotional state on the list. Let yourself feel that way. Be with that feeling. When you feel it, say:

"from you all things emerge and unto you all things return"

Breathe the emotional state out of your body and into the universe that surrounds you, trusting that it will go where it is most needed.

If it helps, imagine it leaving you as coloured light, or visualize it as a symbol you breathe into being as you release it, and then let it float away.

rinse, repeat all the way down the list.

If you get stuck on a particular emotional state, try adding the words 'even this' to the end of your prayer. Sometimes, I add 'especially this' when I'm dealing with something particularly difficult or powerful.

close as you would close any ceremony.

Art Journal Prompt: Paint yourself as an energy witch, able to transmute emotion into power at will.

Find the whole "Holy Mother" prayer upon which this exercise is based [here](#).

exercise: your warrior self

Explore where your emotions are strongest, and what values they reveal as being your core values. What kind of warrior would that make you? Are you a mama warrior? A poet warrior? A self-love warrior? A kindness warrior?

Art Journal Prompt: Paint your inner warrior.

activities and ponderings for april

Explore the stories, myths, and legends from your ancestry about warrior women, or women of power.

List your personal heroines. Who do you look up to? Why? What do they reflect within you?

Create abstract art that expresses emotions *without using text or words*.

Create a symbols dictionary.

Flip through your favourite oracle deck and pick out the ones that seem to reflect your current emotional state. What do these cards tell you about what you're feeling and how you can use the energy of that feeling?

Practice letting your feelings rise up and fill you. Then, blow them out into the universe to be transformed. Apply liberally.



Journal about your relationship with anger. When has your anger served you, and how?

Journal about yourself as powerful. Where are you most powerful? Where do you feel most powerless? How can you increase your sense of empowerment? What empowers you?

Make moon water.

Create with the moon cycle.

Moon bathe.

april recommended reading

[Embracing your negative emotions could boost psychological well being.](#) (Web article)

[Waking The Tiger: Healing Trauma by Peter A. Levine, Ann Frederick](#) (Book)

[The Untethered Soul by Michael A. Singer](#) (Book)

[Circle Of Stones by Judith Duerk](#) (Book)

[The Dance of The Dissident Daughter by Sue Monk Kidd](#)(Book)

[Art Journal Your Archetypes by Gabrielle Javier-Ceruilli](#) (Book)

[Warrior Soul by Laura Probert, Atousa Raissyan, Nathan Ohren, Autumnne Stirling.](#) (Guided Journal)

quotes

"true magic is neither black nor white. it's both,
because nature is both. loving and cruel,
all at the same time. the only good or bad is in the heart
of the witch. life keeps a balance
on its own"

From the movie, "The Craft"


"white magic is poetry.
black magic is anything that works"

- [Victor Anderson](#)

"when you visit a witch, bring an offering:
food, tobacco, alcohol,
secrets, sex, or death."

- Honest Lewis





*"take a lover who looks at you
like maybe you are magic."*

-Frida Kahlo

"sex is kicking death in the ass while singing"

-Charles Bukowski

"...for behold, all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals."

-From The Charge of The Goddess by Doreen Valiente

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