



CAN WE TAKE FROM NATURE WITH REVERENCE?

Episode Transcript

Hey, it's Rebecca, and welcome to Returning. A podcast to return to yourself and the wisdom within. I'm so glad you're here with me. Thanks for returning.

Today, I'm answering a really beautiful Returner question which really explores the intersectional space where sustainability and spirituality meet. It explores can we ever take from nature without leaving a negative impact? Does reverence and intention offset our environmental footprint? If we believe that we are part of nature, how do our choices and actions impact the wider seasons? There's so much to explore. At the end of this episode, you'll also find a guided Soul Inquiry for you to explore your conscious relationship with nature as well.

I know how precious your time is, so let's jump right into opening Sacred Space together now. In the center of your heart, imagine a beautiful flower. With your next breath invited to open petal by petal, revealing a light in the middle. This light is your ancient self, your soul. Invite it to step forward now. And together let's acknowledge the keepers and custodians and spirits of the land where you are, and where I am, known and unknown. Beautiful. Let's begin by listening to today's Returner from Eric.

Eric: Hi Rebecca. I'm working through your teaching. Where your idea is that we rather than living in nature, that we are nature. And we can find our true selves and the sacred and everything in there. And yet I also understand that we also use nature in a way for human comforts. And especially with me, like reading books with all the forests, even knowing there is responsible certified stewardship councils. How can we take from nature? Is my question. How can we take from nature with reverence in respect to ourselves? I hope that makes sense. Thank you.

Thank you for speaking this question, Eric. I can really feel the reverence in your question. And yeah, I really love that you've brought it here. I have been sitting with this question for a while since you sent it through. And yeah, I've been really tuning in to what feels true for me at the moment.

I've got to be really honest. This is a question that I'm constantly living in to myself. I'm also really conscious that your question is one that it's like we're constantly living into and mindful that our answer to this question, or I think it's more an exploration of this question. Yeah, might shift and change with the changing seasons and landscapes and society that we find ourselves in, as well as obviously our changing consciousness. The deeper we go on our spiritual journey. I think it's really important that we keep examining our choices and behaviors. Some things that I keep living into in regards to this question are questions like, so, like, more questions from the question. But yeah, a question I ask myself a lot is, like, how can I get into right relationship with nature, which I think is an ever evolving journey. And another one is how can I become more conscious with my relationship with nature?

Another one which I think is, yeah, it's something that I am deepening into every single day and trying to teach my son as well is what changes if I truly see the sacred in all things. So seeing all things as sacred rather than just kind of unconsciously going through my life, particularly with all my interactions with nature. And, yeah, how am I consciously or unconsciously taking, and if so, how can I give back? I don't want to bypass the real reality of the catastrophic impact that we humans are having on the planet. Don't even get me started with the lack of protection of the oceans and forests and rewilding and also like all the horrible things that are happening with a reverence to sacred sites around the world where obviously as a species failing in so many ways. And also at the same time as ever changing conscious beings, we can only ever work with what is right in front of us, what is true for us in the moment, and bring our own dedication and intention to our environment, our surroundings, our families, our communities. I really believe this is how we cultivate deeper, more lasting change by continuing to do the inner and out of work in our homes and communities, society, and to really consciously work towards change that we all long for.

And at the same time, yeah, I do think that we can upskill ourselves in places where we feel asleep and unconscious. I did a podcast recently called Land Consciousness, and in this episode I tell the story about how when I was beginning my herbalism training, I'd been ordering a particular herb online. This herb was nettle and I was doing it without realizing at first. Even, like, I kind of knew what the plant looked like, but I didn't really and I didn't realize that, you know, eventually, after working with it and connecting with it and receiving this herb, you know, and I was trying to buy sustainably, but I was buying online. And then I ended up finding a local store that sold it. And so I went there and it was feeling better, it felt more conscious. And then I started walking in nature and realizing it was growing everywhere, like wild, like it was just so plentiful all around me. And then there was this one morning where I'll never forget it. I literally opened my front door and through the crack in the pavement, literally on my doorstep, this herb, this nettle was growing and it was growing abundantly. And yeah, it had been there literally the whole time but I just didn't have the eyes to see it. Until I did. And so, yeah, it's an example of, like, how our consciousness changes and then our behaviors change along with our consciousness. And gosh, I am the first to admit I'm ever evolving in this space as I know all of us are.

And I really hear so much within my communities. And I know you're part of the Inner Temple Mystery School. We talk about this quite a bit in there as well of, like, the yearning to be in relationship with the earth, with nature, and how it is an ever evolving process in relationship and journey. Like there are so many examples like this where we can endeavor to bring fresh eyes and a deeper reverence to the way we spend our time, what we interact with and go about our days. Like maybe it's, like, reassessing where we buy our groceries from or even which groceries we purchase. What shifts for us when we consciously eat in tune with the seasons is another example. Maybe starting a veggie patch, watching the veggies grow and, yeah, how long they take to grow as well. What needs to go into a carrot actually growing right before your eyes. I know it's something I love doing with my son and yeah made him definitely appreciate how long potatoes take to grow. One of his greatest joys was like going out and burrowing into the soil to find potatoes. It was just like, what, this is amazing. And I think that, yeah, we're so disconnected from these, like, these incredible miracles that nature provides for us every single day. And so the more we can even just to start with, acknowledge it, I think, you know, little by little we really are deeply changed by it.

Another inquiry that I'm constantly in is around flowers and cut flowers like, you know, should you buy flowers from the store? Should you pick them if you've got them in your garden? I am constantly in question around that. And since I've had my gardens, recently when I've had a garden of my own, I've had less cut flowers around me for sure. Even though yeah, beauty and flowers are such a big part of my work, one thing that I endeavor to do as well is if I do say, for example, cut a rose from my garden and put it in a vase, I'll make sure that I'm embracing all of the stages of the rose. So I'm just looking in at my desk in front of me now, and I've got these beautiful dried rose petals in front of me that I've let fall from the rose that was here probably about a month ago. And they're still there, like blessing the space. And I'm kind of thanking the rose every time I see them and just being like, oh it's so beautiful, you know? So properly witnessing the beauty is, I think, a way of being in conscious relationship with it as well. I will do my best. I've got actually a dryer now that I've got a little bit more, more space since we've moved. And so I yeah, I dry the rose petals. I used to do that on the radiator prior to actually having a proper dryer. But ,yeah, I'll do the same with, I'll forage the rose hips from my roses. But I even had an interesting one recently where my son and I foraged the rose hips from my roses. But then I got really busy and I dried the first batch. But the second batch, I left it too late. And yeah, I was like, oh my gosh, I shouldn't have foraged more than I knew I could easily, properly dry and, you know, and then put in jars. Yeah, I'm constantly in relationship with this question and how I can get in even more congruence with nature. And seeing nature as sacred. But I think seeing nature as sacred is such a simple but powerful part of the journey. I'll do the same, like, with the rose petals. If I know the plant hasn't been sprayed, I'll do my best to dry the petals or freeze the petals and save them for, like, retreats or workshops I've got coming up. Rather than, so I'll do that in advance, preparing for it, rather than, you know, rushing around right before I'm teaching and buying them or, you know, having to

cut them immediately. In order to create or produce for that event. And yeah, and I often will use them in rituals and on my altars as well. And then it's like getting into conscious relationship with, like, how we're disposing of the flowers once we've cut them and are we returning them to the earth, for example. Or are we just chucking them in the bin? Really just about like how can we bring reverence to every stage?

Another thing that I'm endeavoring to do at the moment, being a mum, is to teach my kids about being in right relationship in reverence with nature and seeing the sacred in nature. So they're in conscious relationship with it. And yeah, one of my favorite things to do with my son is we do plant identification, like, name that plant. So we'll be like, what's that one? And he'll be like, that is lavender, that is burdock root or burdock, that is St John's-wort, nettle. And I think it's our favorite thing to do because I get so much joy from it. But he loves it now too. And yeah, and so I'm teaching him, like, to recognize the plant. So you're not just, like, glossing over them, but also to, if we are foraging, to ask permission from the plant and thank the plant if we are foraging. And also and, yeah, he's a toddler so he's kind of, you know, and a boy, so sometimes he'll like rip the dandelions out of the ground and just unconsciously kind of, you know, trample on things. And, oh, I try not to react too much, but yeah, I'm teaching him to go back and just like if he had, like, I don't know, hurt a friend of his, I'll get him to apologize to the plant as well. Which is, it sounds really simple, but it's, I think it is a really powerful thing that we can do and can teach our kids.

And yeah, reflecting on this, I feel like I know that a really powerful way for us to get into a deeper relationship with nature in reverence is to witness the huge role that water plays in our life. And I do this personally, and my husband and I do it because, like we've, he's part of the Mystery School training. And so it's changed us just looking at and at our relationship with water. Definitely since we moved to Glastonbury in particular, because everyone, not everyone, but a lot of people here live in such deep reverence to the water with there being two sacred wells, or many wells around, but two in particular that are very sacred that draw people from all over the world here. Also, a lot of people journey to the well every day and fill up their water bottles to drink from the wells as well. And yeah, prior to living here, I realize now that I wasn't in conscious relationship with water for example. And I'm saying that, yeah, I probably haven't, like, I walk to the well with my son and my daughter, but I probably haven't been teaching them about water as sacred and I'm sure it'll come through with osmosis.

But this what I mean like it's just we can't possibly, like, be there and know the answer because we've decided to incarnate in these, like, urgent times. And I think that, you know, like it's so easy to get overwhelmed with it all. But if we can just endeavor to just bring our consciousness and soften around it, like not be so harsh on ourselves because know when we shame ourselves, like, we kind of like shut down and cut off and so how can we open to it and lean in and lean into the unlearning and the relearning and, you know, all of that? And yeah, and I think obviously with water, like as I've taught in the Mystery School, but also in my Healing Waters Oracle, the thing that

transformed me completely with working with water was just how instrumental it is to life. Like nothing living on this planet can exist without water. And so there's this incredible opportunity for us to, if we are to see water is sacred, we would see all living things as sacred. Obviously, like water is such a huge part of our day, you know, from making a coffee, to brushing your teeth, watering your garden, having a shower or a bath, eating your vegetables, like questioning how intimate we can get with the countless daily interactions that we have with this living element of nature. How can we crack open our routines and return to that place of innate reverence for this really powerful element of life? And I know that, yeah, when I began working with water in such an intimate way in the Mystery School creation and then also the Healing Waters Oracle has really brought face to face with, like, gosh you know, this is such a privilege to have. First of all, like, access to fresh drinking water to start with. And yeah, we really have on the planet a very urgent problem of water poverty, inequality and scarcity. And gosh, this problem feels like such a huge one. But I knew, like, I knew I couldn't solve it on my own. Definitely not. There's no frickin way I could even, like, not even be a drop in the ocean, you know? But, you know, if we come across it all with that approach then, you know, we won't get anywhere. And so, yeah, so I did my research with my team, and we decided to pledge a percentage of all our profits for the Healing Waters Oracle to a charity called Charity Water. And so, yeah, we decided to put at the end of the Oracle and then in the Inner Temple Mystery School Training workbook as well, there is a two page on this charity with a QR code inviting anyone who would like to give to that charity as well. And I think that, I think, yeah, like within the Mystery School, the practice that we have in there, but it's a practice that first stemmed from one that I was doing in my life was this practice of witnessing the waters. So witnessing all of our touch points with the sacred element, with water all through our life. From, like I said before, brushing our teeth, washing our vegetables, having a shower, and, like, bringing awareness and gratitude and thanks and reverence to this element for all that it brings us.

And yeah, it really is, for me my deepest approach is to acknowledge the sacred that's all around us. Acknowledge everything that nature gives us and brings us and nourishes us. And being in proper connection with the Earth as sacred. And, you know, I like to see the Earth is like our mother that is nourishing us.

I think another big awakening that I had around sustainability with the intersection of spirituality in particular, came through me exploring my relationship with working with incense. I, like many people in the spiritual journey, got into incense quite early on. And yeah, would, like, have, you know, light and incense stick probably once a week. But then as I began working more deeply with the plants, my relationship really changed and I started discovering that the trees and the plants that my incense and wood and resins and herbs actually came from. And it was not like I, if you had asked me a direct question, I would have been able to name it and I knew them by plant, but I wasn't able to necessarily say or draw it or know what it looked like in particular for all of the plants. And know which culture a particular resin or herb, for example, may be sacred to. What the connection was with my own indigenous tradition when it came to incense and herbs and that kind

of thing. So yeah, it's really deepened around that, my consciousness, around that, around burning incense and wood and tree leaves, herbs and resins. And so really, like, unpacking my relationship with them allowed me to enter into a deeper, reverent relationship with them and appreciate them, but also connect with it even more deeply. In my ancestral tradition, the use of herbal smoke is known as saining. And saining's the practice of burning herbs or pieces of trees for healing and space clearing purposes. I use incense and resin from trees in my personal practice and also when I'm hosting groups. And actually one of the most transformative moments for me when it came to spirituality and sustainability and being in conscious relationship with sacred plants was when I was preparing for one of my UK retreats in Somerset, and my friend Tash invited me to begin foraging for the retreat we were holding. And we foraged on the land that's connected to the retreat center where she's also a custodian. And interestingly, we began the foraging process in February, and the retreat wasn't until I think it was, like, end of July, no end of June, beginning of July. And so we began the foraging process for that retreat in February in order to create the resin for the summer ahead. And yeah, until I did that, I didn't realize how long it would take to forage resin and what was involved in it, you know? This is what I mean about constantly deepening our connection, our relationship, our awareness with it. And we're all in different stages of the journey with this in all different types of relationships as well.

But yeah, this practice really invited me to deeply honor the sacred resin from that tree, from that spruce tree, and actually to really, really appreciate it and use it sparingly. I then shared the journey that we've been on to gather the tree. We then also did a practice which we created called forest cocooning by the spruce tree that we foraged from that was within a forest on this like really juicy moss, it was just so gorgeous. And yeah, and so we were properly in relationship with the tree that had offered the resin to us. And yeah, it was, it was really moving, seeing how moved everyone was in understanding that process. And it sounds so simple, but it was, it was really impactful. It changed me and it definitely, I know, changed a lot of people on the retreat and I think that it opened many of our eyes to, yeah, that relationship with sacred herbs, sacred resins and incense and using them consciously.

And so yeah, I'm sharing all of this to simply invite us to keep on reflecting on how we have mindfully or unmindfully, for example, been doing this practice, like whether it's working with incense or herbs. You know obviously I'm sure many of you are aware of, like, the harm that's, and the problematic relationship many people have had with white sage in spiritual communities. This plant's being commodified by those who aren't of the culture it's sacred to, and as a result, the sacred herb is now endangered. And so it's like, how can we bring consciousness to our relationship with these sacred plants? How can we look into what is readily available to us that is sacred of our culture or of the lands that we are on and literally at our front door? Like the story that I shared before about the nettle. So, yes, complex, complex inquiry.

So returning to your question, Eric, I think, you know, it's such a complex one that I think that we're constantly living into. And for me it feels true that living in tune with the cycles and seasons of life can help us get into a better conscious relationship with nature. So where we're consciously connecting with it, seeing it with reverence rather than just like taking from it unconsciously. But, yeah, perhaps it's only ever a returning. Obviously we are nature, we're not separate from it. And whilst we see firsthand the devastating impact that humans can have when we abuse our power and unconsciously interact with nature, I believe just as much we can also do our best to weave the sacred back into all the touchpoints that we have with nature. And yeah, constantly softening and living into the question of how we can be in conscious relationship with nature and be part of the future that we believe in and that we want to be part of co-creating here together. So thank you for bringing this epic, really huge question here. It's been nice to be able to ponder on it with you. I'm sure many of you are pondering in your own way with this huge question that I think so many of us have. And yeah, I'm really curious about how this lands in you, Eric, and in all of us.

I think it's perfect time for us now to inquire into that through our Soul Inquiry process. The practice that we do at the end of every episode to deepen our connection with our inner self and also feel into what has arisen within us in line with the topic for the episode. And so today's Soul Inquiry prompt is - how am I consciously or unconsciously taking from nature? How am I consciously or unconsciously taking from nature? How can I give back to nature? How can I give back to nature? And as always what is one baby step you can take to embody that today? Something that's come up. What's one baby step you're being called to take today?

Let's all share a breath together as we close this Sacred Space. I'm so grateful for you being here. If you have a question you'd like me to chat through in an episode in the future, then send a voice note through to podcast@rebeccacampbell.me. If you'd like to keep returning to yourself and returning here with me, then please hit subscribe. If you love this podcast, leaving a review or a five-star rating really helps others to find it too. You can find the show notes from today's episode over at rebeccacampbell.me/podcast. Thanks for returning.