

The Astropoetic School of Soul-Discovery

News From The Astropoetic School September 2022

Greetings from [The Astropoetic School of Soul Discovery](#) in the Missouri Ozarks, where the liminal space of late summer has uncharacteristically brought an acute awareness of the presence of death.

A Tribute to My Mentor

Dick Prosapio: June 11, 1935 – July 25, 2022

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Dick (Coyote) Prosapio was a modern-day Renaissance man, having at one time or another, been a DJ and life-long jazz aficionado; a pilot; a psychotherapist; a ceremonialist; an author and photographer, among many other pursuits and interests. He will, however, be most fondly remembered for leading the Long Dance – an adaptation of the Sioux Sun Dance for contemporary Westerners – for over 30 years.

Initially a skeptic and a hard-nosed pragmatist, Coyote eventually developed an extraordinary gift for creating and holding a sacred space in which those who came

to the dances could experience tangible magic, unexpected transformation, and the power of shared intention. With the help of his longtime wife, partner and co-facilitator, Elizabeth (Raven), and a small ever-changing staff of workshop presenters, and logistical wranglers, the dance routinely changed lives in ways that defied rational explanation.

I met Coyote in 1986, when I attended the first of many dances. Eventually, he invited me to present a workshop during the Long Dance, creating a space for me to step up and discover a capacity to teach that I didn't know I had. Throughout the 35+ years of our association, he encouraged me and supported me in many ways, for which I am eternally grateful. We were friends who shared a quirky sense of humor, a reverence for the sacred nature of life and an irreverence for the absurd. Occasionally, we were sparring partners. Of all the people I can count on one hand that have helped to shape my life and make it what it is, he is one.

Inside the dances and in everyday life, Coyote often modeled for us all how to deal with gnarly issues head-on, dance our dances full-out, as he put it, and live on the cutting edge of balance and growth. To the end, he did this with sly humor, touching vulnerability, and coyote wisdom won the hard way, a winning alchemy he shared with great generosity of spirit. He is sorely missed, although each of us who has been to one or more dances, will forever carry a piece of him in our hearts, and a memory of how just the right word, or gesture, or look at just the right time, made all the difference, as we, his living legacy, carry on.

The following is a piece I wrote in 1988, about one of the early Long Dances:

The Rhythm of the Road

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Driving the last endless stretch of dirt road into the San Mateo mountains, I pondered the life I was coming here to dance. It was a good life, rich with creative fertility, ripe with succulence and love. My heart welled with gratitude for the many gifts I had been given in recent days. I looked forward to re-connecting with old friends, meeting new companions on the journey, entering the magical realm of ceremony and ritual once again.

I remember my first Long Dance, in the spring of 1986. It was just after I had arrived in New Mexico from the Missouri Ozarks. I recall receiving the brochure as I was packing, and feeling invited to another world. I was drawn by a certainty that I belonged in this world, even though my rational mind had few landmarks it could recognize. At this dance, in the rugged desert lands of Ah-She-Sla-Pa, I had a sense of crossing a threshold I could no longer re-cross, touching and awakening a part of myself that would never again go back to sleep. This part of me, which I hesitate to define, has called me back again and again, hungry for food it could not buy in any store.

"Had it really been two years since my last dance," I wondered. As I pulled into the gentle valley where this dance was about to unfold, the time between dances slipped

silently into the twilight crack between the worlds, and I was already dancing as I had always done.

The dance has a long history of evolution, beginning perhaps with the Sioux Sun Dance, a rigorous ritual of physical endurance, sacrifice and surrender that was banned by the encroaching white civilization that feared its deeper implications. In its current form, the dance began in the fall of 1982, led by a Blackfoot shaman from New York, Charles Lawrence. Charles had studied with both Black Elk and Jean Houston, and brought a strong Native American influence to the dance. This was later to change, as Joseph Rael, his successor in the leadership of the dances, began to adapt the original form to better suit the needs of Western, non-Indian seekers of vision and truth. Joseph had been a Sun Dancer in the Ute tradition, but was also a talented psychotherapist with a deep understanding of the level on which these dances changed people's lives.

Dick Prosapio, the current leader of the Long Dance, began doing them with Charles Lawrence in fall of 1982, and continued working with Joseph Rael, when he took the reins in the spring of 1984. At first, these were dances of physical endurance for Dick, or Coyote, as he is called in the world of the dance. But then, at a dance in the Grand Canyon one year, it began to dawn on him that there were deeper levels to the dance he had not yet explored.

At this dance, Coyote became angry that he was doing so much work, setting up a sweat lodge for 30 people by himself, doing grunt work for people with little sense of appreciation. In his anger, Coyote sat on the sidelines of the dance, projecting his hostility, his guilt, and every other negative emotion in his repertoire on the other people dancing. Because in the other world, he was a practicing psychotherapist, he could recognize the power of this dance to draw forth his shadow and mirror the self-limiting patterns in his life. He recognized the dance to be a path he could follow to a stronger connection with his spirit, and from this point on, he began paying attention to the dance as a metaphor and a catalyst to transformation and release.

"Every aspect of this journey becomes metaphorically and concretely intertwined with everyday life," Coyote says of the dance in his brochure. "Yet, it is experienced as "magical" in the truest sense of the word: 'an event that contains a mysterious and overpowering quality that lends singular distinction and enchantment.'

"It is in this enchantment that the changes occur; changes that go deeper than behavioral alteration, changes that effect life courses, that heal old wounds, that alter old belief systems, that lift the limits of possibility for those who would challenge themselves."

Those who had come to challenge themselves at this dance came from every walk of life: an engineer from Michigan; a horse-breeder from California; a woman teaching yoga in the prisons of New York; a man who had just spent a year of his life travelling around the world – 25 people in all, each of them with an intriguing story of human travail endured and wisdom won. Some had come for integration; some to claim their power; some in gratitude; some to play; some to satisfy their curiosity; still others knew not why they had come, but could not resist the deeper call that was echoed in their hearts upon hearing about the dance.

The opening circle was delayed because of a short storm that had come to greet us. At Ah-She-Sla-Pa, where the dances had been held earlier, this rain would have been disastrous, as there in times past, such rain turned the dusty sand to muddy slime. But here, at Ula-Mahina, the fertile Valley of the Moon, the rain came as a harbinger of the abundance that was to be harvested throughout our long weekend together. As we stood around the central fire, telling a little bit about ourselves and why we had come, the first soundings of community began to fill the spaces between the flickering forms that housed only strangers a short time ago.

"This is the 12th dance," Coyote told us, "the dance of the Hanged Man, of not knowing, and of harvest, of calling home and gathering in. Welcome to the harvesting of your lives, welcome to the dance. I could also welcome you into another reality, for during the next three and a half days, we will leave the other world behind. But for me, this is the *only* reality, the world in which I live. This dirt," he said, picking up a handful of Ula-Mahina's soil with conviction and relief breaking in his voice, "is more real to me than any psychiatric hospital. I come here to reclaim my sanity."

Coyote's obvious gratitude for the beauty of this place in which we had gathered, and the dance we were about to share, was tangible, as he gave thanks to each of the four directions, Mother Earth and Father Sky, with his ceremonial pipe, and blew a personal blessing of smoke into the heart of each participant. Some stood quietly talking afterwards, old friends hugging and welcoming each other; others drifted quietly back to their tents. The circle had been formed, would not be broken until we broke camp three days hence.

The next morning, we began as we had ended the night before, with a ceremonial burning and smudging of cedar, sage, sweetgrass, creosote bush, and copal. Before the dawn, we gathered on a nearby ridge, again to honor the spirit keepers of the four directions and each other for the work we were about to do together. We sang a southern Ute song to greet the rising sun, a song, Coyote explained, to awaken hope in the hearts of humankind, and after breakfast, set about our preparations for the dance.

I volunteered, with a couple others, to dig a community latrine, as the majority of our group set about erecting the sweat lodge. Talking as we took turns picking and digging, the man who had travelled around the world, a lawyer from Delaware, and I discovered the common sense of adventure that had drawn us to this place. Bonds of friendship and camaraderie were forged in sweat and ribald good humor, and the differences that might never have connected us in the other world fell away like molting skin.

I joined the group for the building of the dance circle. Additional strands of cooperation and communion were woven throughout the group as we wrapped colored yarn around the dance circle poles: brown for the Earth; yellow for the East, the place of illumination and awakening; green for South, the place of the child, of innocence and trust, and of courage; red for the West, the place of introspection, of manifestation, and of death; white for the North, the place of ancestral wisdom, tradition, and inner knowing; blue for the Sky. A braid of all colors tied the first pole to the last, and formed the gateway through which we would enter the ceremonial circle. Crystals were planted in each of the four directions, and directions in

between, and the circle dedicated to Spirit. I felt connected and charged with expectation.

The afternoon seemed interminable. I grumbled beneath my breath about the seeming excess of free-time, until I caught myself remembering the dance was a metaphor, and took a good honest look at the way that I tended to wait for others to create my reality for me. I decided to make more of an effort to reach out, and initiated a conversation with a woman about to make a major shift in career, uncertain about her marriage. I was able to offer her some support, and was reminded of the valuable place that I, and each of us, and each of those who will never make it to the dance holds in this circle. Later I realized that one of my tasks at this dance, and in life, was to overcome my basic fear and mistrust of other people. For me, I decided, that was what the "downtime" at the dance was for.

Toward the end of the afternoon, we assembled on the ridge for a dance of integration. Two lines, one held a stick, the other a bow. Dancing with the stick, we each danced our male side – assertive, linear, direct; with the bow, our female side – yielding, circular, and flowing. Then holding bow and stick together, we danced the integration. I was surprised to find how balanced I felt doing all three dances. What seemed more difficult was the last dance, dancing with the stick while someone else danced the bow – finding the balance between myself and another person, learning to assert myself in a balanced way within the world. These were not judgements made by some external authority figure or psychotherapeutic guru – they were observations I was able to make about myself in heightened clarity through the metaphor of the dance, observations that allowed me to experiment freely with change. At earlier dances, I had noticed that the pain of holding back was worse than the pain of risking new behavior. At this dance, it seemed the experiment was easier and more playfully made – a measure perhaps of the cumulative effect of dancing, both in and out of the "formal" dance.

That night, we had our opening sweat lodge ceremony, an ancient tribal rite of purification and preparation. This was the first of two sweats we would do, lead by a woman named Mershona, a creative expressive therapist with a rich background in theater arts, mask-making, and the exploration of personal symbols, as well as nearly a decade of involvement with Native American tradition and the Medicine Path. "We are not out here playing Indian," Coyote explained earlier. "We are out here playing ourselves. We use these symbols because they speak to us; we work with them and make them our own." Watching Mershona work, and interacting with her between ceremonies, I could feel the truth of Coyote's words embodied. Here was a woman who had taken the time to observe the natural world and absorb its teachings, to learn the medicine of the eagle, the elk, and the coyote, and to feel her connection to these creatures, her place within creation. What she brought to the dance was her being, forged of observation and reflection, as well as the living she had done. I felt touched and inspired by her presence. At this dance she was an old friend – seen in a new light of appreciation.

"In the sweat lodge," she explained, "we re-create the world. We re-enter the primordial soup, where earth, air, fire, and water come together with consciousness or spirit – all of the original ingredients that were present at the dawn of creation are here tonight, and we are here to re-enact the Creation. On a personal level, we are reentering the womb, re-creating ourselves."

This was not the first sweat I had been to, but it can only be described as one of the most powerful. The outward form was by now an old friend, but the energy in the lodge was new. We sang a number of songs, some of them Native American, some of them from other traditions, a few contemporary favorites. We took turns praying, taking risks, reaching out, building trust, forging community in close sweaty darkness – walls broken down, spirit released in many forms.

Mershona spoke of the vulture medicine, and called it into the lodge. She invited each of us to allow ourselves to be cleansed of diseased, decayed, and outworn energies, releasing what we no longer needed for better use elsewhere. One man, suffering from a diabetic condition aggravated by the heat, not sure that he could endure his discomfort, cried out for help. Mershona asked him to consult the wisdom of his own body, and he decided to stay, to confront his demons. A space was made for him to lie down. A woman who earlier decided not to stay at the dance was prayed for, and encircled lovingly in spirit. Someone else expressed a sense of gratitude for the presence of his son, which triggered grief in another man about the recent suicide of his, and allowed another to release some guilt he had felt about not loving his as much as he could. A silent bond of connection between all fathers was forged in warm, comforting darkness. Someone else expressed a need to leave the lodge in the middle of one of the four rounds, and after asking him to consider staying, Mershona let him go. The lodge was intense for everyone, and seemed to end without completion.

The next day, we took time for a talking circle to discuss the lodge. Some felt that Mershona was too rigid in trying to control the flow of energies in the lodge, and criticized her for handling things badly. Others, including myself, felt an appreciation for the skill she was able to exercise in meeting a difficult situation gracefully. It seemed a fine line between taking responsibility for the well-being of others in a transformative space, and letting go enough to allow Spirit to work unimpeded by unnecessary control. I admired Mershona for putting herself in that place, for having the courage to seek that balance.

Having aired our grievances and our support, we moved on to completing what we started in the lodge. Several men spoke of memories from Viet Nam that were reawakened by the heat of the sweat. A woman released some previously unacknowledged grief. Mention was made of the fact that when water was passed between rounds it often never made it completely around to the other side. Coyote spoke of how in this dance as in life, we need to be able to depend on each other, that in pursuing our individual paths of self-actualization, we need to remember that there are other selves out there, and that our actions have impact. As we talk, a handful of peanuts were passed around the circle, the unspoken object of the game being for at least one of them to return to the hand from which it was first passed. On the second try, we succeeded and a lesson about the building of community was learned.

Later I talked to Coyote about community. It seemed to me that what this dance was about, beyond catalyzing change in people's lives, was the building of community. Coyote felt uneasy with my observation. "At the last dance," he confided, "there were a group of people, who felt that what this dance was about was the building of community – about a group of friends getting together at the turning of the seasons. That is not how I see it. To me this dance is about transformation, about change. I do not expect to see the same faces dance after dance after dance and that is ok."

Coyote's disclaimer aside, however, I came away from this dance with a new understanding of community – not as a stable group of people in ongoing relationship to each other, but rather as an attitude about relationship. To me it is no small accomplishment for 25 people to come together for 3 1/2 days, and share their souls, their private pain, their joy with each other. Together, in a short span of time, we had created an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance, in which it was possible to lay down burdens, find new courage, open to a new depth of self-trust. Though we might never see each other again, this memory of what community feels like, had planted a seed which would grow through all of our interactions in the other world. This was a gift to be carried lightly, but not to be dismissed.

The last day before the dance was spent in further preparation. We finished our banners, personal statements about our lives, crafted from cloth, leather, fur, bells, feathers, paint, crystals, and every manner of material that fit our imaginations. We made necklaces of cloth and tobacco, to remind us of our intentions in this dance, some for people we loved, some for goals we hoped to accomplish, some for qualities we wished to express. We crafted sticks to dance with, magic wands with which to bless our journeys, machetes to cut our paths clear of debris. We sang songs and did dances, laughed and cried, the pitch of excitement building to a soft crescendo.

Ana Kaipaka, or Chinvat as she was known in the world of the dance, lead us in a beautiful guided meditation to consult with our inner teachers, a meditation I had done many times before in other forms, but one that brought a new sense of wonder in her gentle and skillful hands. A native Hawaiian, Sufi priest and Kahuna, well versed in traditional ways, Chinvat, the third facilitator of this dance, often seemed to take a less active role than Coyote and Mershona. Perhaps her recent leg injury slowed her down; perhaps it was just her way. When she did speak, it was with quiet authority, gentle good humor, humility, and an implacable sense of wisdom from other times and places. Her eyes spoke of clarity and joy. I found myself wanting to learn more of what she had to share.

Before the dance, we took turns speaking about our banners. Suddenly, the time seemed very short. Where the day before, time seemed interminable, today it was compressed. Each person had a rich story to tell, parts of which were shared throughout the weekend, but the banners spoke eloquently of larger journeys, mythological pathways into the hearts and souls of divine beings grounded in these mortal bodies. I wanted to hear more, but had to content myself with dancing the essence of these banners into myself as I moved around the circle later that night.

Just after dark, a procession of dancers wound their way toward the dance circle, led by a solitary drum, serenaded by my saxophone upon request from Coyote. The full moon, followed by its companion, Mars, was just rising over the eastern ridge. At the threshold of the circle, each dancer was smudged by Hermes, a mysterious figure in black cape and a mask of mirror fragments, and severed from the world outside the circle by a swift pass of an eagle feather behind them. When all were assembled in the circle in front of their banners, the central fire was lit, the drumming started, and the dance began.

At this point, I find myself somewhat at a loss. There is no way to really describe the dance, for its language is not the language we speak in this ordinary world of form. I can say that I danced my gratitude, and my joy – that I felt great connection to my

own life, as it was reflected to me in my banner, that I moved at times with amazing energy, at times barely at all, that I felt alive and connected to everyone and everything around me, that the night stretched on forever, and was over in the blinking of an eye. At times, I would feel awakened by a surge of inspiration, a sense of the appropriateness of some aspect of my life, a sense of movement forward. At other times, I would feel a falling away of some fragment, an ending on other levels, a wisp of sadness like smoke curling toward the sky. The people in my life floated in and out of my awareness, and were present with me, in my heart and through my movement. Once I took off into the hills to play my saxophone to the night, abandoning myself to a familiar music I had never played before. Before the dance I had made myself a mask from surgical bandage, paint, feathers, and bells. In the dance, it came alive with joy and power. Shaking my head back and forth, the bells seemed to invoke a greater energy than this mortal body would normally have at 3 AM, and I was grateful for its blessing. I occasionally took my turn on the grandfather drum that kept a more or less constant rhythm through the night. The moon and Mars were my clock, but time did not exist. The morning came like a dream intruding upon a heightened state of attunement to every subtle nuance of feeling and intuitive truth.

Before dawn, we again marched in procession to a solitary drum beat, to enter the final sweat lodge of the weekend. This lodge, led by Coyote, was fueled by stories of great humor, deep feeling, and tricksterish play. One story about a dog unleashed a flood of painful memories in one man, who had been forced to kill stray dogs as a child, and a final round of release shook off the residues of unfinished business loosened by the dance. At this point, it was difficult to tell where I ended and my companions began. Nor did it matter any longer. I could feel every pain, every joy – there was no separation. We had touched the core of our humanity and made it tangible as common food. The feast was complete, and I was full.

Emerging from the sweat, the sunrise seemed exceptionally bright, the world new, shining with a light I had forgotten was there. I could only sit in empty-headed gratitude for several minutes, before I found the will to move.

The rest of the day went quickly, a muffled blur of movement and quiet joy. A final ceremony, the give-away, was further expression of the interweaving of lives we had experienced throughout the weekend. Before the dance, we had each brought a treasure from our past it was time to let go of, or pass on. I had brought an amethyst crystal, which I was inspired earlier in the weekend to give away to someone I felt should have it. In this ceremony, I was moved to give away a pair of Mexican rattles I had used for several years in my personal ritual work, a gift that some part of me balked at giving, but some deeper part of me was ready to release. I surrendered, and received a Native American tarot deck in return. A new opening revealed itself, and the reshuffled order of the universe was affirmed.

In this last circle, several people were moved to speak of the suffering of the Earth, and the necessity for taking action toward the healing of our Mother. Clichéd preaching in the hands of some; alive with poignancy in this circle.

A final feast, the taking down of sweat lodge and dance circle, the return of this valley home, as much as possible to its pre-dance condition, lingering goodbyes, and then the journey home. A tired sadness filled my heart. The excitement I had felt before the dance seemed to fade into the light of day. The next few days found me

in a state of profound depression, not unlike experiences I had had earlier in my life with psychoactive drugs. Such magic was felt during the dance, that suddenly the poverty of "mundane" reality struck me. Not that my life was devoid of magic, but I was being challenged with the task of remembering it in each moment.

In the midst of my depression, I decided to take a journey to Chaco Canyon with a friend. On the way in, I was complaining to him about the difficulties in my life, about how slowly everything seemed to move. Just as I had worked myself up to a feverish pitch, a coyote appeared before us, and stood staring at us from the middle of the road. I turned off my engine, and we sat watching. A few timeless moments later, the coyote vanished into the brush. I stopped complaining, and drove off in silence through the ruins of a distant time. An echo of perpetual drumming kept the rhythm of the road.

Using Astrological Imagery To Make a Connection to Spirit

This second short piece is an excerpt from Chapter Nineteen of *The Seven Gates of Soul*, in which I explore a dream that I had at an early Long Dance that led to my adoption of the medicine name Redwolf. In the context of the book, taken as a whole, I am using this dream as a point of departure for exploring my personal relationship to the archetype of Mars, and feeling my way into a deeper understanding of my Mars-Mercury square.

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In September, 1986, I had a dream. In this dream, I am walking home in semi-darkness, being followed by, and sometimes following, a gray wolf with red eyes. I manage to elude him and get inside my house (which reminds me of the house in which I lived, right after I was born), when I notice that a door on the second floor is open. In trying to secure the door, I inadvertently knock down the entire wall, and can only surrender myself to the inevitable encounter with the wolf that is coming.

As it happened, this second dream took place on the opening night of an annual gathering in the New Mexico desert to celebrate the turning of the seasons. The gatherings are loosely structured around Native American ceremonies, and attended by people from all walks of life who find the ceremonies a meaningful way to mark the passage of soul time. Among these traditions is the practice of forming a more conscious relationship with one or more animal spirits, called *totems*, with which one feels a sense of resonance. Once such a relationship is identified, the qualities and ways of being associated with the animal often serve as a pivot point around which important life lessons are absorbed. In the Native American traditions in which totems are a central feature, individuals often adopt or are given names – called medicine names – that reflect the relationship with their totem animal, and perhaps with some quality in particular, possessed by the totem animal that they wish to more consciously embody. Choosing a totem animal and a medicine name is often not a rational decision, but rather a process of opening to a sense of resonance in a moment of synchronicity. My dream felt like such a moment and in its wake, I felt inspired to adopt the medicine name, Redwolf.

At the time, the name seemed to embody the masculine side of my nature, an energy I felt compelled to call on more intentionally, as an antidote to my vulnerability. I chose the color red, in part, because in my dream the wolf's eyes were red, but also because red is associated with Mars, traditionally understood to be the archetypal embodiment of masculine energy. Sitting at the apex of a major pattern in my chart conjunct Saturn, Mars represents an area in my psyche I consider to be most in need of healing and integration. My adoption of this name in the wake of this dream was in part, a conscious nod to this ongoing healing process.

There was much more to the adoption of this name, however, than my conscious mind could possibly assimilate, and by choosing it, I also unwittingly opened a door to soul space that I did not previously know was there. This became evident to me immediately, for the morning after I had this dream and assumed this name, I felt great sadness. I went off into the desert and cried. My sadness stemmed in part from a lingering sense of vulnerability from the dream, but my vulnerability also had a deeper source that seemed to belong to the embodied world and everything in it. In that moment, I cried not just for myself, but also for all the suffering that filled the world. This sense of the world as a vulnerable place of suffering, and my emotional response to it, was the essence of the image that I was projecting into the world at that time, and accessing that essence was an intensely powerful experience.

At the time that I had this dream, transiting Mars was not at one of the cardinal points of its cycle with Mercury, though it was exactly *semi-sextile* (an aspect of 30 degrees) Mars and *quincunx* (an aspect of 150 degrees) Mercury, while four other planets (Sun, Moon, Jupiter and Uranus) were within *orb* (range) of an exact hard aspect to both natal planets. It was, in fact, the night of a full Moon, which itself was opposed natal Mars and square Mercury. Given this powerful convergence of astrological factors simultaneously triggering my natal Mars-Mercury square, I feel safe in assuming this experience was part of this same resonant pattern I have been discussing in relation to these planets.

Though astrological patterns can be helpful as a point of entry into the unconscious dimensions of a given resonant pattern, the farther in we go, the less rigidly attached to astrological correlates it behooves us to be. Traditional astrologers, in fact would not necessarily recognize the wolf as a symbol for Mars, nor does this particular symbolic equation necessarily mean anything in a generic sense. It does, however, evoke a powerful sense of resonance within the context of my subjective soul space, so for me, it is a fitting image of Mars through which I am able to project that aspect of my soul into the world.

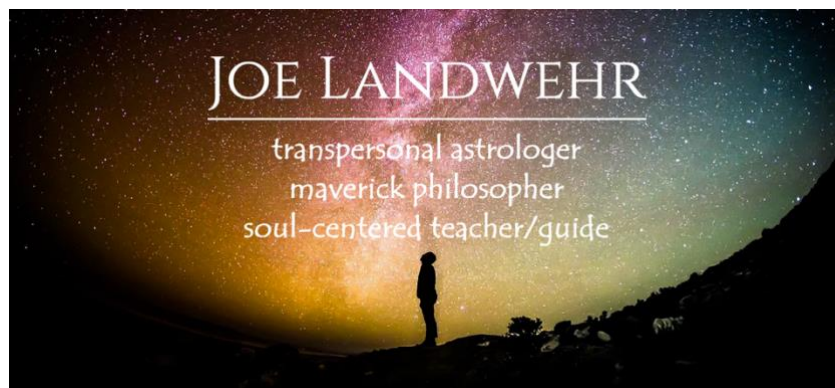
I worked through a great deal of vulnerability with this medicine name over the course of the next ten years or so, as I asserted myself into situations that initially felt beyond my control. Instead of being a victim of circumstances, I learned to access a place of deeper strength and resourcefulness within myself – symbolized by the wolf, and to work with it, to create a space in which something positive could happen. One might say I was learning, in the context of this resonant pattern, to function more effectively in the face of situations that could potentially broadside me. I learned to think on my feet, respond to the unexpected in the moment, and flow with whatever was happening in the here and now. I still often call on this energy – which is now a part of me – whenever I feel I need the strength of my wolf totem in situations of great vulnerability.

The Rules of the Dance

from *Becoming Coyote: A Journey of Enlightenment (Mostly)* by Richard Prosapio

1. *Your dance is Sacred*. Be conscious of who you are and where you are, for the space you dance in is Sacred too. None of us dances alone on this earth; there are other life forms and boundaries we must keep in consciousness as we dance.*
2. *Dance to and from the edge of your balance. This means that you must not strive to be in perfect control of all of your dance. If control becomes more important than expression, if form becomes a primary goal, then creativity and spontaneity are lost, you will have become entranced by "performance" and the result will be only that you have been kept safe from a discovery of your wonder.*
3. *Dance FULL OUT! This means that your responsibility is to dance your best always. Anything less is to betray your spirit. Push your limiting boundaries, be afraid – and do it anyway. Incorporate your mistakes into your dance. If you stumble, even if you fall, recover and incorporate the misstep into the rhythm of your dance. This is how live jazz is played; improvised on-the-spot to all that life presents us with. This is how we learn to use our deviations from perfection as creative springboards in order to move on through life with grace and beauty.*
4. *Dance for yourself first, then as you learn who you are, you **must** share your dance with others. This is your responsibility as a Life Dancer, to bring the magic of your discovery to another. This gives them hope and enlivens their dance.*
5. *Remember Rule #1. No matter how small or large the space, it is your responsibility to know the boundaries within which you dance. All is Sacred, you, your dance, the ground you dance upon, and those you dance with and for.*

** Sacred is defined as something to which attention is paid and held in high regard, as in all-of-creation.*



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