

The Novena a Vessel of Self Inquiry, Revelation, Healing & Devotion

The word ‘novena’ comes from the root word for the number nine. Nine is a mystical number symbolizing completion and wisdom, the last number before the return to 0, the symbol of unity. In the Tarot it is the number of the Hermit or the Crone, the archetypes of wisdom gained through walking the path of life’s initiations. Then, of course, we have the association with the nine months of gestation before the birth of a child.

I learned the practice of the novena, nine days of prayer or some other spiritual practice for healing, peace, reconciliation, or some other intention for self or others as a child. I still make novenas, often using writing, meditation, prayer, sacred pipe ceremonies, or making art. Anything can become prayer, sacred communion, and spiritual practice with intention and devotion. There is mystery, spiritual presence, and alchemy in doing any practice for a specific period of time for a particular intention. The time and the practice become a vessel for the alchemy to happen.

Alchemy happens when we allow what is here to pour forth through writing without censorship, judging, or editing, and we simply witness what is arising, what comes through our fingers on the keyboard. There can be what we know, and what we don’t know, what surprises us, revelation and discovery, as well as compassion. Add to that a partner who serves as our Sacred Witness and reads what we write with compassion and a loving distance, without judgment, comment, critique, trying to fix or help, or becoming involved in the stories we write. The Sacred Witness, which you also will be for a partner, honors the integrity of what is, as it is--a rare and beautiful relationship.

To be the Sacred Witness for someone else is participating in a sacrament. We read another’s precious writing and we respond only with “I hear you saying...” We do not engage in the content or critique the writing, we just let our writing partner know what we hear them saying. Our own exploration is catalyzed by what another shares, how it takes us in new directions we might not have considered going.

This is an amazing practice for self inquiry, accessing and releasing feelings discovery of connections between life events that we didn’t know were there, healing, and dis-identifying with old pain,. It is a fabulous way to bring consciousness to shadow and pain and realize more freedom.

The Container for the Writing Novena

A *container* provides a safe vessel and parameters in which all kinds of awakening, healing, and transformation occurs. It offers the power of the Group consciousness and a field of united intention that literally works its own alchemy. Things become possible for us that seem inaccessible when we try to do these things by ourselves.

- **The Nine Days of Writing will begin the day after our first teleconference.**
- **1000 typed words** is about a *page and a half*. You can do that, or less if that is best for you.
- You will have a **Sacred Witness/Writing Partner** and be that for someone else.
- You will email or somehow share your writing with your writing partner, and will not be emailing to the whole group or to me. Some choose to read their writings to each other rather than email them.
- The only response the Sacred Witness offers to the writing is “I hear you saying...” You email your response/reflection to them each day. This is no more than a couple of sentences. We will discuss responses in the first teleconference.
- Writing partners do not engage the writer’s emotional process or critique the writing—they simply witness what has been written. There is no need to ‘help’ or ‘fix’ anything or anyone.
- This ‘non-interference’ with the other’s writing and process allows for much alchemy to happen within each individual. It’s rather magical!
- **Sacred Witnesses** will be arranged at our first call. You are free to have contact with your Sacred Witness outside of the email sharings, as you choose.
- The teleconferences can be used to work with the material arising in your writing, witnessing each other’s process, asking questions, and learning from each other. Practices and tools will be offered as the need arises.
- You can choose to work with Love and Relationships in general, or choose a specific area, such as *body, family of origin, lovers, marriage, children, nature, money*--whatever is ‘up’ for you at this time.
- You can focus on what’s here *now*, a theme that has threaded through your whole life, an issue from the past that is as yet unresolved, a shadow piece of you that is knocking at your door waiting to be welcomed in. Whatever arises will be just the right thing for you at this time.
- **Sacred Questions** will be offered by me (Sheila) as writing prompts if you should choose to use them. You can use the **Sacred Questions** to invite things into awareness. Or not!
- You will not share your writing with me. My support of you and what is arising will come via the teleconferences, during which I will offer practices, skills, ways to work with the material that you bring.
- **Private in individual sessions** can be arranged if you should decide to dive more deeply into a particular issue.
- **The group has the option of continuing...** negotiating a time frame of writing together, with once-a-month teleconferences, sacred questions, new topics. The most recent group had so much happen that they chose to go on together for a year, writing each month, changing partners monthly, and meeting with me via teleconference once a month, as well as receiving sacred questions each month.
- **Cancellation Policy:** cancellations must be in writing and responded to by SF, as some emails fall into the void. There is a \$50 processing fee if prior to the first teleconference, there are no refunds or transfer of tuition after that.

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## Questions You May Have

- **Can I really write 1000 words per day? It seems like a lot.**

Yes, you can! Though I was longing to do this, I didn't know if I could and I discovered that it is a page and a half typed and takes no more than 1.5 hours! After my first experience with writing 1000 words a day for ten days in Max Regan's summer Writing Boot Camp, I could not stop! I started another ten days with a writing partner, and then did another, and another... each on different topics. I am still at it, and find that sharing the writing with a partner via email makes a huge difference knowing that someone is witnessing me and what is coming forth. If you miss a day then that also becomes part of this unfoldment. No problem. Do what you can do. I found that a writing 'groove' happened for me so I am writing just about every day now, and have done quite a few 10 days/1000 words a day since that first one. I am loving the revelation, the alchemy, the peace that arises within me via this practice.

- **Does it have to be "good" writing?**

No! This is not about writing a great piece. It is writing without judgment, without editing as you go, without stopping to think. I don't even re-read mine until days or weeks later. It is allowing what arises in you to pour out freely, on to the paper or keyboard. There does not have to be any struggle.

- **What do I do if struggle or resistance arise?**

Struggle is in the mind. If struggle arises, write about that. If resistance arises, write about that. There is no requirement to produce a finished product. This is about self-inquiry, self-revelation, and healing and *being with what is as it is*. If you should decide to take the writing farther after the Novena, great. If not, great. If you want to work on the craft of your writing, I recommend Max Regan - [maxregan@mac.com](mailto:maxregan@mac.com) - to help you with that, if you don't already have a writing coach.

- **Can I write more than 1000 words if I am inspired? Or less than 1000?**

You can write as much or as little as you want. I ask that you not send more than 1000 words, +/- a few words, to your writing partner.

- **Do I have to write in paragraphs or can it be poetry or have embedded images? If I get a wildly creative idea can I try it out?**

Sure—go for it! Do what works for you. For some it may be complete sentences in paragraphs, or it may be stream of consciousness with no punctuation. Do whatever wants to happen, whatever works for you.

- **If you have other questions, please email me: [temenosctr@aol.com](mailto:temenosctr@aol.com)**

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What Participants Say About the Writing Novena

The first Writing Novena Group loved it so much and found it so revelatory that they decided to continue, meeting on telly once a month... so there are possibilities for an ongoing group.

- It is difficult to articulate in two dimensional language how powerful the process of the Writing Novena has been to me. The practice of writing is wonderful, in and of itself, as a powerful mechanism for accessing one's True Voice. Yet when coupled with the Presence of a Sacred Witness, this writing Novena experience creates a vessel for transformation unlike any that I have experienced. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity. Pregnant with transcendence ~ S.
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- The timing felt perfect for the writing Novena, being witnessed and connected felt really important when I was feeling so fragile, helped me see, allow, feel, felt safe to be me. Thank you, Love, ~W
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- I LOVE to write, and have fallen off the wagon of regular writing more times than I can name. Being in a novena circle holds me accountable to write at times I might not otherwise. AND - - diving in has taken me places I did not foresee and has bridged healing to not quite forgotten wounds. I am grateful for precious support from the circle and writing partners. ~ D
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- The writing novena helped me find my own authentic voice, and the process of sharing the writing with a partner was validating. My partner reflected things that I didn't realize were there (without any judgments), opening up new opportunities for exploration and discovery. I feel as if this writing, which has been going on for about four months now, is proving to be alchemical. Change is happening very subtly and gently. New perspectives are emerging. This body/life piece is seeming to bring into being processes that have been stirring. I'm feeling as if I don't have language for the specifics, except to say that greater gentleness towards myself, more wisdom in general, and surprising moments of loving Bob more deeply are all appearing. The writing, and the ability to review what I've written provide me with a sense of grounding I haven't had before. I can go back and look through what I've written and be reminded about the processes that have moved me to this place. That makes the shifts simultaneously less magical and more magical. ~L
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- When I began this novena process, I could not begin to imagine (and I have a pretty wild imagination!) the deep healing, profound transformation, and incredible love that would continue to unfold in my life. Who knew that by accepting this invitation so much grace would be waiting? With great fullness of heart, ~S
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Inquiries for Novenas

Here are some possibilities - if any of you come up with other questions/inquiries, i'd love to add them to our list, so please send them over.

1. Reveal to me what i need to know about...
2. Show me the gross and the subtleties of...
3. Take me to the root of...
4. Show me the early experiences related to this issue...
5. Show me my shadow, show me what i can't see and don't know about this issue...
6. How do I work with this?
7. Show me, tell me about....
8. Guide me...
9. Show me my attachments in this

10. Help me stay present and be curious about what's cooking here...
11. Help me see the next 9 days through the 'template' of my novena request... see everything as related, informing, revealing, etc
12. Show me my obstacles, resistances to having what i am asking for...

Take a look at the 'dreamscape' around your issue/question.....what is co-arising in the field, happening in your life along with whatever you are working on? We don't ordinarily think to connect the dots as everything seems so separate, but when you look, and see it as a whole rather than separate events, it's often very revealing... sharing your dreamscape with your partner can be great help as she may see what you cannot.

You can make a list of these things or a map on paper with your novena request in the center...you can also collage or draw them. There is the opportunity to see the 'pattern that connects' and you might find some surprises.. you can also work with what you see as you would a dream...for example, you can inquire of the 'characters' that show up in this dreamscape...ask about your novena inquiry... 'what do you have to do with this?'

Also, list making, 10 min writings, eft, doing the fixation work together, samyama, voice dialog... whatever works for you... enjoy... in joy...

