

# Dance of Life

Mary O'Malley<sup>1</sup>

**Breathe.** Close your eyes and begin to open to the flow of your breath. In and out, deep and slow. Drop down and into your belly, allowing your body to soften and open with every breath. Ride the rhythm of this wonderful dance that has moved through you from the first moment of your life. It is the rhythm of the tides, the seasons and of birth and death. Open to the river that is moving through you. It comes from cedar trees in the mountains of China, from dolphins in the deep blue Pacific and from people in the houses around you. With the next breath, breathe in the universe and as you breathe out, bless it and send it on its way, cascading over the Rockies, being received by cornfields in Iowa, blessing children in Africa. In the next in breath, see it returning full circle to you again, touched by a multitude of beings on its journey around the planet. As you breathe out, begin to send roots from the base of your spine down into the earth and on the next in breath, breathe in the sustaining, supportive energy that is there. With every breath, send your roots deeper into the earth, grounding yourself in her nourishing, nurturing energy. Then *literally* breathe her in on the next in breath. With every breath, ground deeper into the earth and allow the very cells of your body to be nourished by her energy.

Resting in your breath, allow your awareness to expand and open, becoming bigger than the building you are sitting in. Allow your vision to sweep across the surrounding area, seeing people, roads and nature herself.

Expand even more, seeing for miles. As your awareness becomes bigger and broader, begin to see the edges of the continent you are sitting on and watch the curve of the earth arrive. When you can see the entire globe in its wholeness, allow your heart to be moved by her beauty. Opening even more, find yourself sitting on the moon and there before you, dancing through vast oceans of space is the blue green jewel that is the earth. Notice how tiny she is in the overall scheme of things, framed by the deep dark blackness of unlimited space. Open your awareness to the awesome creativity that is expressing itself as this being. Compare that to the other celestial bodies in the neighborhood, the moon you are sitting on, Venus, Mars and become awed at how creativity was able to slip through the crack between the opposing forces of life and express so extravagantly across the face of the earth. Notice something very wondrous. There are no boundaries written on her face. No Russia, no US, no African countries. The only lines of demarcation are in the minds of human beings. See the similarity of all of the activity happening right now on the planet. People dancing, raging, learning, laughing, birthing, killing, sleeping, loving, mating, meditating, dying. See that some people are very young and some very old, some very contracted and some very open; some very rich and some very poor; some very dark and some very light. See it all as a dance, the rising and falling of the waves of life. See yourself as a part of this flow,

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<sup>1</sup> Transcript of "Dance of Life" by Mary O'Malley, 2004. Shared with permission. Recordings about the Dance of Life are available from [www.maryomalley.com](http://www.maryomalley.com) or call 425-889-5937.

sitting quietly on the earth. Acknowledge every being as an essential thread in the tapestry of life. Comprehend that we are all in this together. There is no them. There is only us.

Staying with the rhythm of your breath, see the earth as a developing being, birthed out of the mystery of life. As with all things, it had a babyhood, a childhood and is still growing into her maturity with all of the bumps and bruises, joys and sorrows inherent in that process. Understand that at each phase of her growth she was about creating something new and different. See the oceans. At one time, there was no water so she figured out how to bring hydrogen and oxygen together to make this wondrous gift. At one time there was no atmosphere, so for eons, little one cell beings joyously expressed themselves, oxygenating the planet. At one time there were no eyes, so a few cells figured out how to tell the difference between dark and light, and eyes were born. Acknowledge all of the eyes that right now are peaking out from the dense foliage of the rain forest, are receiving the glimmer of light in the depth of the oceans, are gazing upon new born babies. From this spacious view, look at this developing being dancing before you with great curiosity. What is the earth about at this time? What is asking to be born in the birthing crisis we find ourselves in? Acknowledge that for billions of years the main focus of creativity has been on the cellular level, molecules coming together to make cells, cells coming together into multi cell beings and now the fairly new arrival of the human being with its capacity to receive and perceive life. See clouds surrounding the heads of most every person. Open to the possibility that the next shift in evolution will happen in the realm of consciousness, in the human beings vision of life. See the clouds evaporating, clearing each persons sight, opening their hearts as they again reconnect with life. Watch them

moving through their days with a new radiance, vitality and aliveness that comes from seeing the unity of everything. Watch life evolving through the next millennium into the place where human beings reconnect with the sacredness of each person, rock, leaf and each and every experience of their lives. See them acknowledging the importance of every animal, cloud, tree, dolphin, snowflake, ant, and stone, gazing through the eyes of deep respect and appreciation, kindness and care. Watch the falling away of greed, war, lack and limitation as we collectively awaken to the full potential of life on this planet.

Allow your heart to soar with the fullness of what it could be like and connect this with your breath. From this heart space, begin to journey back to the earth, slowly seeing her fill up your vision until you loose sight of the curve of her edges and you see in front of you the continent you are resting upon, then the country, the city, the neighborhood, the building, the room, your body. Again, find the river of breath flowing through you and breathe yourself deep into the earth. Know that you *are* the earth. You may not have roots nor the *fluidity* of an ocean, but you are the earth none the less. Know that you have been brought forth out of the creativity of life because you have a part to play in the awakening of our planet. Be willing to open your consciousness over and over again to this spacious awareness of the interconnectedness of all and the absolute necessity of you. Know that the same creativity that has brought forth galaxies is moving through you right now. On the next in breath, slowly open your eyes and see, really see what surrounds you with new eyes. This is your life. It has been made up of moments like this flowing into moments like this. And so many of them you have missed. This is the only moment that matters. There are no ordinary moments. This is a trustable process. There are no

ordinary moments. This is a trustable process. There are no ordinary moments. This is a trustable process.

We are a developing being. Jonas Salk reminds us that up to this point evolution has been biologically based. The shift that is asking to be born now, is happening within human perception, dependent upon our ability to hold a new vision of what life is about and the part we play. What we pay attention to makes a difference in the unfolding of our planet. Intention, the art of feeling and holding in our consciousness the shift that wants to happen, is the organizing power of this awakening. How we hold what is happening and what is asking to be born on our planet is the seed for what is to come. We are being born out of "me" consciousness and into "we" consciousness. We are letting go of the narrow absorption with our own story that is so certain about separation, fear and war. We are being born into the knowing of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all of life, and the radiance and reverence that comes from that. We are on the cusp of possibility, the likes of which we have never seen before. May we nourish and support this vision in our daily lives.

To hold this space even for a few minutes of each day is to heal our planet. As we begin to connect with the soaring, healing and nourishing aspects of this vision, we discover that the pull back into contraction is very strong. A gift of remembering that we can give ourselves every day is the Dance of Life, a moving prayer that allows our bodies, our minds and our hearts to reconnect and remember this healing vision.

## **The Dance**

The dance is from the Cherokee tribe and is as old as the wind. It has been danced for eons exclusively by the elders and spiritual leaders of the tribe, specifically to hold their collective vision and ancient wisdom. A number of years ago, a Cherokee woman began teaching the dance to people not of the tribe. When challenged by the elders, her response was that the power of this dance to mend the sacred hoop of life is awesome and that the healing that is asking to be born among human beings is bigger than the Cherokee tribe can hold. "This healing needs to happen within the minds and hearts of all beings and because of this, I give them the dance," she said. Since I first learned this dance 18 years ago from Julie Wester, it has been spreading across the face of this planet, touching people from the far corners of our globe. Right now, as you are listening to this tape, people from each of the four directions are individually and collectively dancing the awakening of our planet. It honors all of life by honoring the seven directions: mother earth, father sky, the North, South, East and West, and the heart. It is a moving prayer of giving and receiving, grounding and opening, empowerment and humility, the linking up of all beings through the vision of our oneness.

The dance draws upon ancient Indian stories that say at one time, the people in each of the directions were given a piece of the truth to nourish and sustain and to weave with the truths from the other directions. Life became imbalanced when each of the directions felt that their truth was the only truth. This brought the world into division and separation. Many tribes, from the Mayans to the Cherokee, believe that the end of this millennium, the years we are now living, is a sacred time, a time where it is

possible to weave the pieces of truth back into a tapestry of wholeness.

## The Seven Directions

Before we go onto the specifics of the dance, let us explore the gifts that come from each of the directions.

**Mother Earth:** We are born of the earth, suckle at her breast and our bodies return back to her when we die. With every step we take, she lovingly holds us close to her and with every beat of our hearts, she supports us as we go spinning and dancing through vast oceans of space. She represents the highest of the feminine principle we each carry; nourishment, nurturance, awesome creativity, an abundance of love and continuous support no matter what happens.

**Father Sky:** It is the sharp and focused vision of the hawk, the cleansing dance of the wind. It is the vast expanse of openness that holds vision for us. It is the perspective from which we can find the part we are to play. It is the seed bearer of our destiny, holding the strength and the vision of limitless possibilities, both qualities that are needed on our journey. It embodies the masculine principle inside each one of us.

**East:** The east is divine inspiration. It is the new day. The rising sun reminds us of the uniqueness of each moment and of each being. This awareness can open us to the awesome intelligence that brings forth sunrises, galaxies, ladybugs and dewdrops, reminding us of the sacredness of all. It gently grounds us into the knowing that this life force is absolutely everywhere, in your breath and your eyelashes, the sound of the tape, the water you last drank, the light surrounding you. The east embodies the air element and the color yellow.

**South:** The south is faith and trust. It is the innocence and playful quality of childhood, coupled with the clear perception of the adult. It is the deep knowing that there is something far bigger than us in charge of life. It is the willingness to let go and allow ourselves to be supported, loved and guided by this wisdom. It gives us the stamina and endurance to walk the dance of awakening. The south embodies the fire element and the color black.

**West:** The west is destiny. It is the understanding that never before has there been another human being such as you and there will never be again. You have a piece of the puzzle that is essential to the rest of us. There never having been another you, there is no blueprint for what you are to become, so the west is about the courage to live on the edge of the unknown and to birth yourself, expressing that out in the world. It is the place of discovering that you have been brought forth for very specific reasons and each experience of your life, no matter how dark or confusing are part of the awakening into how you are destined to serve the planet. The west embodies the water element and the color red.

**North:** The north is heart wisdom. It is the knowing that love is the guiding principle of life. Love has brought it all forth and holds it all together. The north understands that we are loved more than we can possibly know, by every tree we pass by, by every breath we breathe, by every bite of food we eat. One of the greatest gifts we can give to life is to fall in love with ourselves, as deeply as the earth loves us. This is the birthplace for the fullness of love expressing on our planet. The north embodies the earth element and the color white.

**The Heart:** All of the movements of the dance travel through and are connected with the heart. The ability to include the

paradoxes of life is the point of power. The heart is the place where all can be included. Jung calls the heart the coincidence of opposites. The Little Prince reminds us, "It is with the heart that one sees rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye." Another way to say this is that the mind creates the separation and the heart crosses it. We live in the level of duality, male and female up and down, left and right, in and out. In the heart nothing needs to be excluded; our strengths and our weaknesses, our clarity and our confusion, our love and our hate, the oppressor and the oppressed, the opposite poles of life. From this power of inclusion, our actions become clearer and cleaner, more in alignment with the whole, allowing the healing of our planet.

## **Directions for the Dance**

Now let us explore the dance together.

Facing east, start by bringing the feet together, side by side, touching. Ground your roots into the earth with your hands palm down, a few inches from your side. On the in breath, with the palms raised upward, bring your arms up from your sides, making a full circle until the palms touch together directly above your head. Lower the right hand slightly, touching its tips to the bottom of the left hand. Keeping the hands in this position, bring the energy down until the right hand is in front of your heart and the tips of the left hand are in front of your forehead. The circling of the arms is the act of including all beings into the dance with you. The placing of the hands connects the heart and the mind. Pause here for a few minutes, allowing the earth to hold you. Expand your awareness out to feel the earth being held by space, supporting you as you spin and dance thousands of miles per hour through the cosmos. Honor the gift of your life and recognize that you are dancing for the whole earth. This is the opening move

and is the only time you will do it. Now come to center by allowing the hands to rest a few inches from your side and ground it into the earth by sending roots of energy out of your palms and your feet. This is the centering place, a posture that we return to over and over again in the dance. Now spread your feet about shoulder width apart so that you feel solid and centered. Begin by lifting your right arm and leg together, across your body to the left, sweeping up to the sky in a circle and back around again. As your right foot connects with the earth, reach down with both arms to gather in the earth's energy. With your hands, pull the earth's energy up to your heart. At the heart, raise your hands widely above your head, and looking up, give the earth's energy to the sky. Then bring your hands together again above your head, drawing your hands and the gifts of the sky back into your heart. Now return to the place of centering with your hands, palms down, at your side. This is the place that earth and sky, male and female, giving and receiving, meet. Pause for a moment, honoring the strength and calmness of your center. Now we do the same exact movements on the other side. Lift your left arm and leg together, across your body to the right, sweeping up to the sky in a circle and back around again. As your left foot connects with the earth, reach down with both arms to gather in the earth's energy. With your hands, pull the earth's energy up to your heart. At the heart, raise your hands widely above your head, and looking up, give the earth's energy to the sky. Then bring your hands together again above your head, gathering all that this spaciousness means to you, and drawing the gifts back into your heart. Return to the place of centering with your hands, palms down, at your side. This is the movement of joining earth energy with sky energy, through the heart, and will be repeated every time you face a new direction.

From this centered position, do a gathering motion with your hands at shoulder level, repeatedly drawing in and receiving all of the gifts from the east. Do this for about 3 breaths. Then step forward with your left leg, extending the hands straight out from your heart and keeping them at this level, bring them towards your back. Then circle your hands straight back in front of you and draw them and the energy of the east into your heart. Leave your feet in place and twist them to the right into the exact opposite direction, which is west. You don't pick up your feet at all. Then open your arms to the west, giving forth the gifts of the east, connecting these two directions together. Now draw in your hands, along with the gifts of the west straight into your heart and twist your feet 1/4 turn to the left so that you are now facing South. Bring your hands to the centering position at your sides and pause for a few breaths.

Facing a new direction, all that we have just done is repeated. Lift your right arm and leg together, across your body to the left, sweeping up to the sky in a circle and back around again. As your right foot connects with the earth, reach down with both arms to gather in the earth's energy. With your hands, pull this energy up to your heart. At the heart, raise your hands widely above your head, and looking up, give the earth's energy to the sky. Then bring your hands together again above your head, and draw your hands and the gifts back into your heart. Return to the place of centering with your hands, palms down, at your side. Pause for a moment, honoring the strength and calmness of your center. Now lift your left arm and leg together, across your body to the right, sweeping up to the sky in a circle and back around again. As your left foot connects with the earth, reach down with both arms to gather in the earth's energy. With your hands, pull this energy up to your heart. At the heart, raise your hands widely

above your head, and looking up, give the earth's energy to the sky. Then bring your hands together again above your head and draw them back to your heart. Now return to the place of centering with your hands, palms down, at your side.

From this centered position, do a gathering motion with your hands at shoulder level, repeatedly drawing in and receiving all of the gifts from the south. Do this for about 3 breaths. Then step forward with your left leg, extending the hands straight out from your heart and keeping them at this level, bring them towards your back. Then circle your hands straight back in front of you and draw them and the energy of the South into your heart. Without lifting your feet, twist them to the right into the exact opposite direction, which is North. Then open your arms to the North, giving forth the gifts of the South. Now draw in your hands, along with the gifts of the North straight into your heart and twist your feet 1/4 turn to the left so that you are now facing West. Bring your hands to the centering position at your sides and pause for a few breaths.

Let us now do the dance with the breath. If the movements don't make sense yet, reverse the tape to the end of the opening movement and practice a few more times before adding conscious breathing to the dance. On an in breath lift your right arm and leg together, across your body to the left, sweeping up to the sky in a circle and back around again. As your right foot connects with the earth, exhale and reach down with both arms to gather in the earth's energy. On an in breath, pull the earth's energy up to your heart. On an out breath, raise your hands widely above your head, and looking up, give the earth's energy to the sky. On an inbreath, bring your hands together again above your head, and draw the gifts back into your heart. On an exhale, return to the place of centering with your hands, palms

down, at your side. Pause for a moment. On an inbreath, lift your left arm and leg together, across your body to the right, sweeping up to the sky in a circle and back around again. As your left foot connects with the earth, on an exhale reach down with both arms to gather in the earth's energy. On an inhale, pull the earth's energy up to your heart. On an exhale, raise your hands widely above your head, and looking up, give the earth's energy to the sky. On an inhale, bring your hands together again above your head, gathering all that this spaciousness means to you, and drawing the gifts back into your heart. On an exhale, return to the place of centering with your hands, palms down, at your side.

From this centered position, do a gathering motion with your hands at shoulder level, repeatedly drawing in and receiving all of the gifts from the west. Do this for about 3 breaths. On an exhale, step forward with your left leg, extending the hands straight out from your heart and keeping them at this level, bring them towards your back. On an in breath, circle your hands straight back in front of you and draw them and the energy of the west into your heart. Leave your feet in place and twist them to the right into the exact opposite direction, which is east. On an exhale, open your arms to the east giving forth the gifts of the west. On an inhale, draw in your hands, along with the gifts of the east straight into your heart and twist your feet 1/4 turn to the left so that you are now facing North. On an out breath, bring your hands to the centering position at your sides and pause for a few breaths.

You are now facing the final direction. On an in breath lift your right arm and leg together, across your body to the left, sweeping up to the sky in a circle and back around again. As your right foot connects with the earth, exhale and reach down with both arms to gather in the earth's energy.

On an in breath, pull the earth's energy up to your heart. On an out breath, raise your hands widely above your head, and looking up, give the earth's energy to the sky. On an in breath, bring your hands together again above your head, and draw the gifts back into your heart. On an exhale, return to the place of centering. Pause for a moment. On an in breath, lift your left arm and leg together, across your body to the right, sweeping up to the sky in a circle and back around again. As your left foot connects with the earth, on an exhale reach down with both arms to gather in the earth's energy. On an inhale, pull the earth's energy up to your heart. On an exhale, raise your hands widely above your head. On an inhale, bring your hands together again above your head, gathering all that this spaciousness means to you, and drawing the gifts back into your heart. On an exhale, return to the place of centering with your hands, palms down, at your side.

From this centered position, do a gathering motion with your hands at shoulder level, repeatedly drawing in and receiving all of the gifts from the North. On an exhale, step forward with your left leg, extending the hands straight out from your heart and keeping them at this level, bring them towards your back. On an in breath, circle your hands straight back in front of you and draw them and the energy of the North into your heart. Leave your feet in place and twist them to the right into the exact opposite direction, which is south. On an exhale, open your arms to the south giving forth the gifts of the North and connecting these two directions together. On an inhale, draw in your hands, along with the gifts of the south straight into your heart and twist your feet 1/4 turn to the left so that you are now facing East, the beginning of the dance. Bring your hands to the centering position at your sides on an out breath and pause for a few breaths.

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You have now completed one round of the dance. The suggested number of rounds is 9. Play with it, I also like 4 and 7. One round is better than none. In the beginning, let go of trying to coordinate the breath with your movements. When your body can flow with the dance, then allow yourself to be moved by your breath. The basic guidelines are that every time one gathers in energy from each of the directions, this is done on an in breath. When one opens, gives and grounds, this is done on the out breath.

As you become more familiar with the dance, in the balancing earth with sky movement, add a very gentle opening on the left side of your body as you begin to lift the right arm and leg in front of you. It is experienced as a subtle twisting movement of the upper part of your body. Do the same on the other side.

One of the most powerful aspects of the dance in the intentional drawing in the gifts that each of the directions represent. Stay present enough so that you can allow your body to be flooded with the nourishing and nurturing energy of the earth and the vision and clarity of the sky. As you open to the North, South, East and West, lead with your heart and open your whole being to what each direction has to give to you. Strongly draw in these gifts and shower the opposite direction with this bounty. Feel the giving and receiving that is arm energy. When you draw the gifts of each of the directions into your being, you literally are drawing in the essence that resides there. The sky is the sky but the sky is something more than the sky. Each facet of life is the outer expression of a quality of the divine. The Indians knew that to wear a feather of an eagle is to open to the essence that the eagle represents. All of life is just energy, not solid, separate objects, and your intention to draw in the earth, the

sky, the inspiration of the east actually brings this energy into your being. To train the mind into this way of viewing life by consciously drawing in the essence of each of the directions is to access levels of support and awareness that birth worlds beyond our greatest hope and imagination.

It is skillful to commit each round to the awakening of a particular quality, both individually and collectively or for the healing of a person, a group of people or the earth itself. The best time to claim it is when you are facing east at the beginning of a round, resting in the centering position. When you circle the arms and legs together in the earth and sky balancing movements, consciously draw in all beings that will benefit from the intention of this round. You can dance for clarity, kindness, faith, love, vision, trust, attention, any quality that will further the healing of you and the planet. You can dance for all of the children of the earth, for your loved ones, for all people facing great challenges at the moment of the dance, for all awakening beings, for all beings still fast asleep, for all people taking their last breath, for the whales, for the air, for the babies that are being born at this moment. Ask what wants to be danced through you. You can also do a round in awareness of all of the other people that are dancing this dance at the same time you are.

One of the most skillful aspects of the dance is that it always comes back to center, reminding us to reconnect into this grounding place throughout our day, showing us that it is always available no matter what is happening. The tendency in the dance, as it is with life, is to unconsciously move through your center into the next moment, into the next move. Whenever you come to center, pause for a moment, relishing in the joy of standing

supported and grounded in the middle of it all.

The dance eventually becomes a dance of breath. Breath is the place where spirit and matter meet. It is the river of intelligence and benevolence that is flowing through us every moment of our lives. To allow the dance to ride on the waves of breath is to learn how to rest in the life force that animates us. Become aware that with every deep and conscious breath you take, you heal yourself back into life.

Finally, allow yourself to notice how the directions support one another. The divine inspiration of the East supports you in becoming your destiny in the west. You don't have to do it by yourself. As you open into the flowering of your destiny, you bring forth more of the divine inspiration of the east. The innocence and trust of the south is birthed through the knowing in the North that love is always with us. And the heart wisdom of the North manifests on this planet as we learn to access the trust of the south.

## **'Lit by Love'**

I would like to end with a story told by Patricia Sun in the mid 1970's. She spoke of a voice that once came to her in a meditation. At that time she had been a psychic healer in Berkeley and the voice said, "Are you willing to let go of this ability in order to serve in a greater way?" Her immediate response was "No. Then people will think I have been a fake." It took her a number of months before she was willing to say yes. She then asked what she was destined to do. The voice said "End all wars." Of course, she immediately came out of the meditation in a fit of unbelieving laughter. When she calmed herself down again, and asked what that meant, she saw in her mind's eye the earth in all of its beauty. Coming towards the earth from all sides were beams of light and as she looked closely she saw that at the leading edge of each beam was a countenance, neither male nor female, but clearly the face of one who had learned how to totally love themselves while still in a body. When they came to the earth they would look in the face of a human being and they would be lit by that love. And then each would turn and look into another face and they would be lit by the love. She saw this spreading across the planet like wildfire and written in the sky above was 20 years.

We are on a cusp. This is a trustable process.  
We are awakening. This is a trustable process.  
You can make a difference. This is a trustable process.