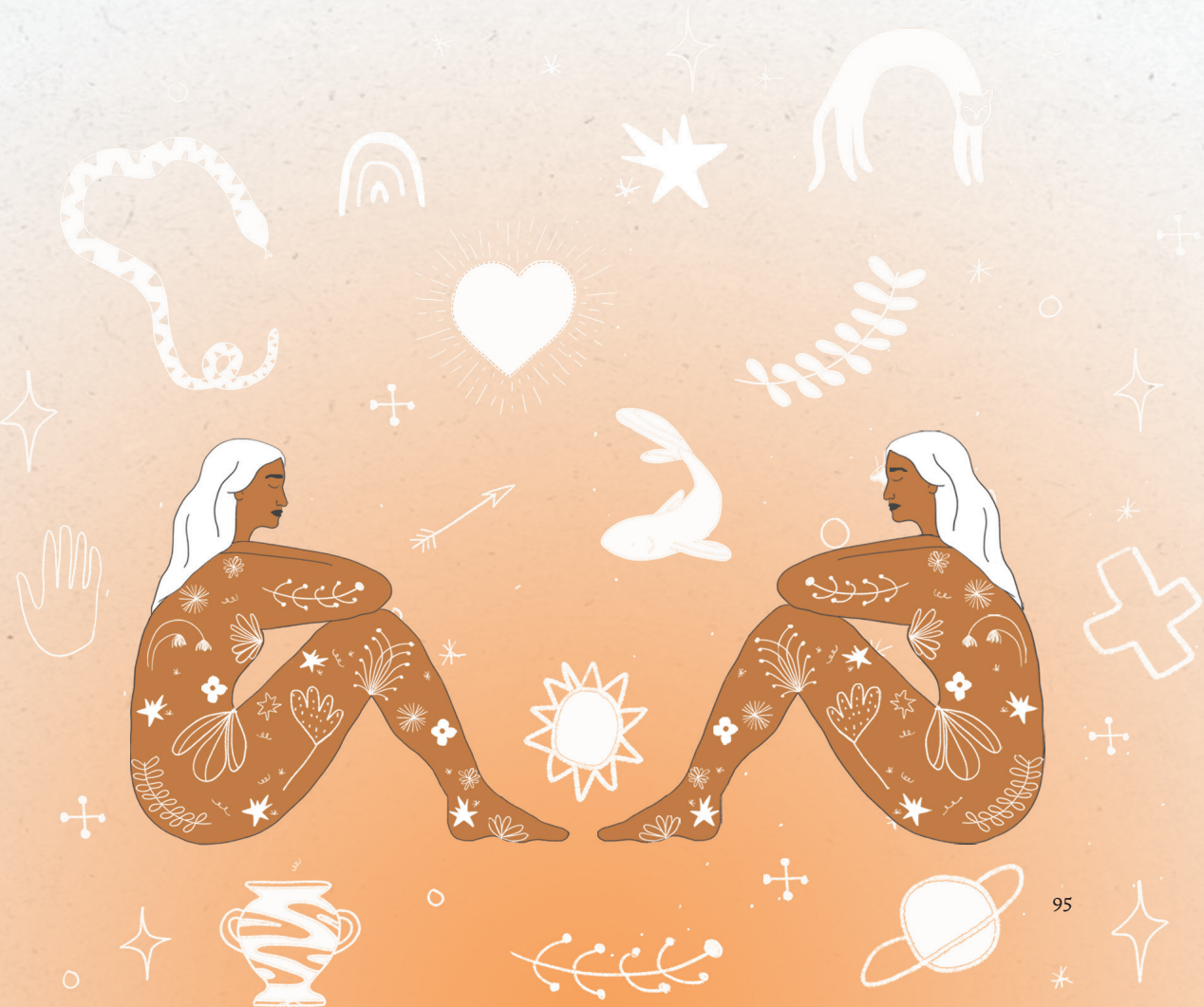


# CREATIVE RITUALS



## Honouring to overcome trauma

We know that change is constant, nothing is permanent. To highlight transitions in life, humankind has created anniversaries and celebrations that act as markers to protect us from getting lost in this ever changing world. And in return, through these repeated events, we created the notion of history and time.

When a traumatic event takes place, it becomes a wound that ruptures in the flow of these historical events. In this way, a trauma can act to disrupt time itself. During such an event, raw emotions attach themselves to the physical sensations we experience. These can then become trigger points. In the case of bushfires, the olfactory sense of smell can be the most challenged. So, for example, if someone's trauma is not processed, a trivial smell such as a barbecue can trigger a strong physical and emotional response in the person.

This is why such traumatic events must be placed back in time, in history to create meaning. To do so, a series of actions must be undertaken, otherwise the traumatised person will live over and over again the unprocessed emotions and feelings.

## Importance of anniversary

Honouring the first anniversary of a traumatic event is very important for recovery. The 'celebration' converts the traumatic experience into history, and gives the person the opportunity to process his/her emotions and feelings. This yearly ritual helps relay emotions and feelings to a symbolic level.

This is why birthdays, reunions, anniversaries or any other type of rituals are so important to us. They are all symbolic events registered at an unconscious and symbolic level where meaning resides. To overcome trauma, we need to weave our emotions and feelings into



a fabric of meanings, of symbols. We commonly know this as the grieving process. The fabric of meanings or grieving process, help us build a new story for ourselves. By not celebrating these essential anniversaries, we instead bottle up our emotions and feelings which cumulate at each anniversary and also, after each new traumatic event. The consequences on our mental health can be devastating.

Our freedom comes from our ability to make history, to create symbols to place such events back in the ongoing nature of time. This can take many forms, from a day spent fishing alone, to a full community led brass orchestra!



# 3D Composition

## Empower yourself

For this activity, imagine that time has passed and a transformation happened within you, as you have overcome the trauma and grief of a confronting event. You have healed. For example, you have found inner peace or strength that you did not know you had; you have learned to love in a more profound way; you are now appreciating every minute, each moment of your life instead of occupying your mind with the traumatic event, in one form or another.

### **Observe**

How does this “healed you” manifest itself (in small and big ways)? How does it feel? What is different about yourself? What do those close to you notice has changed - your behaviours, attitudes, feelings, social interactions etc? Begin this creative meditative exercise in that empowered state.

## Creative and wellbeing activity

Gather 10-15 objects that you like. Choose them because you are attracted to them or better, they are attracted to you! It might be due to their colour, texture, shape, beauty or bizarre aspect, or perhaps their scent... something ‘clicks’. Be completely free, choose the ones you prefer - try not to analyse or evaluate - just let the powers of attraction do the work.

Place a base for the arrangement you are about to create : a scarf, a fabric, a plate, a piece of wood or metal, a furniture or a large piece of paper, plain, coloured or printed.



Now follow the prompts:

- Looking at the objects you gathered, ask yourself what it is in these objects that brings you joy or support. Sift through them with this in mind. Proceed by elimination and keep the best ones.
- Arrange them in a meaningful way so that together they form a pattern which represents support for your transformation. This is a very personal process, do what feels right for you.
- Look for the meaning of their colour/shape and how they talk to you.



The final display gives you pleasure when you look at it. It reminds you of the support that you or invisible forces you can trust are giving to yourself. Work out ways to regularly honour these symbols which represent your inner and outer support.

With time, your shrine might evolve. As you change so will it change too, and you can replace or move the objects around. You may also put offerings like water, flowers, plants or small food. In return, you need to regularly offer these to a place in nature as a thanks for the support and a reminder of the commitment to yourself in this transformative journey.



# Journaling

In your journal, reflect how you could create a meaningful ritual for the upcoming anniversary of a traumatic event you fear. What would you change to the activity you have just done? What about after the anniversary?

Think about the processes you could put in place to deflect the feeling of being victimised by fate and transform it into a feeling of power.

Being an object, water, a song or prier, what could you give back in exchange for the healing you receive? Let your imagination flow and figure the practicalities later on.

## Prompts to avoid reawakening the trauma

Remember that these processes are about nourishing your transformation. If at times you feel the trauma re-awakening, just notice this commencing, then let it go, and bring your awareness gently back to your transformation. You can do this as many times as you need to - just notice, and then let go, and bring your awareness back to your transformation.

The emphasis is put on your potential to heal. Use your imagination to portray who you will be once the pain is healed. Sense that the difficulties have become tools that now support you developing the positive aspects of your higher Self, in unexpected ways.

Create a shrine where you place symbolic objects representing the support you want and/or need on your journey to recovery. Empower these objects with that trust. Know that you can return here whenever you want.







# Activity for Children

Materials needed:

A young tree, shovel, thread, pen, paper/cards.

A quiet space to dress an altar.

## Activity

The following celebration lasts for as long as the children feel the need for it. This means that the ritual will evolve over time to answer the children's needs. When they don't engage with this activity any longer, time has come for a closure ceremony to take place.

### Step 1 - Ceremony opening

On the first day, plant a tree with the children to acknowledge the sense of loss caused by the drought and the bushfires. As the tree grows, it will also symbolise resilience and all the goodness that is ahead: growth, bush regeneration, healing.

Children draw or write their wish for recovery on a card and attach it to the tree.

### Step 2 - Weekly ritual

Indoor, in a quiet space, set up an altar dedicated to this ritual. Have a large ceramic bowl on it, filled with water. During the week, children gather on their own time around the altar to reiterate their wish.

Once a week, empty together the ceramic bowl by the foot of the tree. As the children pour the water, they wish the tree to grow splendidly. Refill the bowl and place it back on the altar.



### Step 3 - Closure ceremony

When children feel that time has come and clearly express it, pack up the altar and water the tree one last time together. Thank the tree for its support in this journey towards recovery and bury the ceramic bowl at its foot. Children can sing a song and dance to show one last time their gratitude.

