

AGILE MAGIC MANIFESTO

AN INTRODUCTION TO AGILE MAGICAL PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

There are times when we work on structured goals, within familiar spaces, with defined parameters. The steps are laid out and predetermined -- known.

Then there are times when we don't have the luxury of having that kind of structure. When we don't know what to do next or even where we want to end up. Things are shifting and flexible -- unknown.

We are faced with navigating in unfamiliar territory. No map, however carefully crafted, can help us. We're not navigators... we're explorers.

For these times, we have to be nimble... flexible... agile.

Based on the Manifesto for Agile Software Development*, I present the Agile Magic Manifesto.

We are uncovering better ways of *re-enchanting the world* by doing it and helping others do it.

Through this work we have come to value:

Individuals and interactions over *hierarchy and rules*
Working *enchantment* over comprehensive *philosophy*
***Spiritual* collaboration** over contract negotiation
Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right,
we value the items on the left more.

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INDIVIDUALS AND INTERACTIONS OVER HEIRARCHY AND RULES

This isn't just about the hierarchy of magical orders or who's who in the occult or Pagan communities. This is about levels or divides that keep us from connecting in real ways. It's about external rules that dictate who you talk with or what you can believe. It's about "real" news versus "fake" news. It's about building, and defending, community. It's how we stay out of the bubble.

MAGICAL MANDATES

- Focus on the people and spirits you trust rather than institutions.
- Prioritize those in your tribe and posse: what's right for you isn't right for everyone.
- Think local and act local and enchant local.

ANCESTORS SIMPLIFIED

Those in your immediate ancestral lines are closest to you and have the most investment in your life.

If you have an existing cultural practice for ancestors, use it. But many of us don't. In this case, I recommend the following ancestor reboot:

1. Treat your ancestors like members of your family, which they are (only dead).
2. Forget about fancy altars in out of the way locations. Instead collect pictures or mementos of your beloved dead, frame them, and hang them on a wall in the middle of your house. Ours are in the dining room.
3. Obviously don't put living people up with your dead. That's just impolite to the living.
4. Don't put them in your bedroom! Geez, your grannie doesn't want to see that.
5. If some of your ancestors sucked, just skip them.
6. Beloved dead can include friends, pets, mentors, adopted family, etc. You loved them, they're dead, 'nuf said.
7. Talk to them like you would if they were alive. None of this thee and thou stuff. Ask them for help and blessings. If you have kids, remind them that their genetic progeny need protection. Just like in life, most grandparents are suckers for the kids.
8. Pray for them, not to them.
9. Leave them stuff. Water and fire are always good, but also stuff they liked.
10. Pick a day and have a big celebration for them. Toast them and thank them for another year of being part of your household.

ALL PEOPLE ARE INDIVIDUALS (EVEN ONES WHO AREN'T HUMAN)

There's a lot of discussion in magical communities about the spirit of this plant or animal or mushroom. Spirit of the oak, spirit of the wolf, spirit of the amanita. Which is perfectly valid. But individual plants and animals and funguses have their own individuality and individual spirits too. Just like there's a human spirit, but there's also a spirit in each of us as individuals.

When you call on the spirit of the vine to bless your viniculture efforts, don't forget that each and every vine in your vineyard (or back yard for that matter) is an individual being as well.

Ponder this. If Dionysus is the God of the vine, is he also the god of vines? Do wolves honor the wolf spirit? Does the fungus fruit in honor of its spirit guide? And if we don't know, isn't it better to err on the side of asserting the independent personhood of all?

- Make a point of talking to the non-human people in your environment personally, as individuals, because they are.
- Consider that not all spiritual and magical practice is the sole provenance of humans. Maybe the mushrooms invented religion. Maybe your dog practices necromancy.
- Consider the gifts that we get from other persons, from limbs to bones. Consider what we give in return.

HOUSEHOLD MAGIC

Household is a malleable concept. It can be you and your nuclear family, your three roommates, your six cats, your hetero life mate and his kids, your non-gender specific group marriage, your parents and kids, your sister and her wife, your farm hands, and so on and so forth. You don't even all have to be in the same house! It means that you work together toward shared practical and financial goals, that's all. Let's get past all the bullshit that's been troweled onto the idea in the last 80 years or so.

If you live someplace, you have a household. Even if it's a household of one.

1. Personify the household. Consider it an egregore -- an entity even. It becomes an excellent target for enchantment. Give your household a name, a motto, a family crest even.
2. Ensoule the household. Identify patrons (Saints, Gods, ancestors) who watch over it.
3. Define the household. Draw a line around it and determine who's in and out. This can be a powerful way of creating healthy boundaries. You can also expand your household to include people / animals / spirits you care about.

4. Unmoor the household. Enchantments can attach to the household regardless of place. They can cover members who are in disparate locations.
5. Honor the household. Things like a full pantry, regular maintenance of the place the household is currently residing in, a general sense of order and well-being help keep the household in good health.

Magical suggestions related to the household:

- Protection for the household (which does double duty for the place and the people)
- Calling on spirits to bless the household
- Household altar
- Statements of intent: "In our household, we..."
- Decision-making considering the household as having a vote
- Inclusion of non-physical entities into the household (benevolent ancestors)
- Household cleansing and cleaning (spells for house cleansing often transfer neatly to the household)
- Energy work for the household (like peace or contentment)
- Spell craft -- if you create a simple glyph for your household, it can be easily incorporated into sigils or spells that you want to impact the whole house
- Calling on the house to protect its members
- Creating, blessing, celebrating the household

WORKING ENCHANTMENT OVER COMPREHENSIVE PHILOSOPHY

In the realms of the mystical, the liminal, and the spiritual there isn't some ultimate truth. Well, maybe there is, but we probably won't ever know what it is or get independent confirmation of it... at least not while wearing a meat suit. And that means that we aren't going all ever agree. There are just different theories, some of which are more useful than others. Which brings us to the second point of our agile magic manifesto -- if it works for you, that's enough.

MAGICAL MANDATES

- Whether something works depends on your goal to begin with:
 - Goal: Spiritual enlightenment | Result: More enlightened (people see the light in you)
 - Goal: Practical enchantment | Result: Right direction, meeting goals, life is working
 - Goal: Occult experience | Result: Synchronicity, manifestations, psychic phenomenon
- If there is a possible benefit, try it. Experiment like a science project.
- If it works for you then keep doing it and don't let the opinions of others affect you.

MAGICAL ROI

To get good at magic means making an investment. Apart from general knowledge acquisition (learning for the sake of learning) it makes sense to judge whether you are getting a positive return on your investment.

When you are embarking on a practical project, it's better to work with the tools you already have mastery of. Otherwise, you risk delaying your real goal for the intermediate goal of becoming proficient at a new technique or system. You get a better return because you are starting now.

The tyranny of choice is when too many options keeps you from even getting started. If you spend a year planning, researching, learning, and analyzing – rather than starting – you will be behind where you would be if you had just started, even with the wrong tool or in the wrong direction.

Magical investments are useful, but not when they become blockers to other goals you really want to reach.

MAGIC ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

Analyzing magical techniques for efficacy fits neatly into the simple agile rhythm. Here's the process for determining whether a magical technique works for you.

1. Determine what new technique you will try. Broad categories include:
 - Divination for uncovering the hidden (whether that be the future or the self): Astrology, tarot, I Ching, and so on
 - Odds manipulation: sigils, rootwork, candle magic, oils, herbs, etc.
 - Altering consciousness: meditation, journeying, music, entheogens, and so forth
 - Team building for expanding your posse: ancestors, Saints, spirits, Gods, et al.
2. Determine your acceptance criteria – how will you know it worked?
3. Decide how long you need to judge whether it worked
4. Decide what the first steps are that you can do now and for just a few weeks
5. Take the steps – remember, reading about magic isn't doing magic
6. Measure the results and be objective
7. Identify more steps, rinse, repeat
8. When you get to your end point, see whether it was useful

Don't forget to check in with your existing techniques as well. Are they still meeting your needs? Do you need to refresh them?

SPIRITUAL COLLABORATION OVER CONTRACT NEGOTIATION

Contracts and agreements can be necessary for working with spirits. But when it comes time to make practical goals, having solid spirit relationship is more important than trying to build new ones from scratch. If your goal is wealth, it's better to work with those who are already strongly invested in your success, but who weren't traditionally associated with wealth than to try to hunt down the perfect wealth spirit who doesn't know you. Remember that spirits are people too.

MAGICAL MANDATES

- Build your spirit posse now and maintain relationships as with friends or family
- To approach someone new, get an introduction from someone you already know
- If a spirit approaches you, have your posse vet them first
- Beings in hierarchies should be approached within their hierarchies
- Understand the exceptions to these rules
 - Planetary energies are freely available because they govern all our horoscopes
 - Certain beings are open to all comers, such as Mary and Kuan Yin
 - Certain classes of spirits are available if you approach them correctly (some classes of Eastern spirits for example)

SPIRITS ARE NOT YOUR COLLEAGUES

When you consider spirit engagement, avoid the paradigm of “working with” with its connotations of formulas and effort. Instead, approach spirits with the spirit of “relation to.”

“How do I work with this river?” implies that there's some standard method for river employment. It also suggests that your interaction with the river is purely transactional. It's a question that doesn't really land anywhere.

“How do I relate to this river?” opens a whole different way of thinking:

- Who is this river? What is its name and history? Does it have a body of myth or origin story?
- What is this river about? What does it want and what does it need? What's its relationship to the communities on its banks?
- How might someone approach the river to get to know it? Offer coins or stones? Join a river cleanup effort? Take a boat out onto the river?

RELATIONSHIPS ARE A TWO-WAY STREET

Sometimes you approach someone and it just doesn't work out. Even if you aren't rebuffed, it's clear that it's just not a good match. Or they are just really popular and already have a lot of friends and acquaintances. Sometime someone wants to be your friend, but you aren't really into them. This is true whether or not the person in question is corporeal.

I've called on gods and spirits and gotten the spiritual equivalent a fanmail response letter (Thank you for contacting the offices of Inanna. Her Ladyship very much appreciates your admiration. While the Lady of Largest Heart regrets that She cannot respond personally to all inquiries, please find enclosed a signed portrait...)

I've also called on these folks and gotten very intense responses. I have working relationships with a couple of entities where I initiated contact (St. Brigid/Brigit of Kildare for example) that have had a lasting impact on my life. And there are beings that I've had what I call a situational acquaintanceship with (I made a series of offerings and asked for something in return and we were cool). And not surprisingly what I bring to the table has a lot to do with the results I get.

Some thoughts:

- Don't neglect your own family. Your ancestors are part of you and deserve your attention, even if Aunt Margaret isn't as cool as Diana of the Hunt
- If you want to get the attention of a capital-G God or Goddess, then go to the source material and find the most hardcore sacrifice or ritual you can get away with without being arrested or hospitalized. Then do that. But make sure you want that attention first. This is like being friends with Oprah, awesome but demanding.
- If you want to be friends with someone who was once alive, show that you have something in common.
- For place spirits, you have to "go native" – if you don't love your city, how will the spirits of the city love you?
- Small spirits can be shy but rewarding. The spirits of that specific tree or bush, the spirits of uncool animals (banana slug spirit!) don't get a lot of attention.
- Don't ignore your old friends for cool new entities. When trouble strikes, you don't want to do the spiritual equivalent of looking someone up on LinkedIn. You want someone in your corner already.
- That said, sometimes relationships fade over time. Things change.

Build and nurture those relationships now before you need them. And if you do a good enough job, you may end up not needing them to begin with.

RESPONDING TO CHANGE OVER FOLLOWING A PLAN

If there's one thing you take away from CircleThrice, take this: Planning is necessary, but it's not sufficient. In order to be successful you need to a) get started and keep going and b) adjust your plan as you go.

Responding to change is absolutely necessary in order to reach your goals. Because everything changes -- all the time. It's the nature of reality. And in our current reality things not only change, but they change rapidly, unexpectedly, and abruptly. You have to be on top of change because if you aren't, your plan will rapidly become useless.

MAGICAL MANDATES

- If change is coming fast and furiously, then you need to respond fast and furiously
- Embrace the idea of change: emotionally, intellectually, and practically
- Avoid plans – and magic – that are hard to change as these are ineffective in a high-change environment
- Assume that *every* environment is a high change environment

TINKER, PIVOT, COURSE CORRECT

Construct your plans with change in mind. Choose magic with change in mind. Make decisions with change in mind.

- Do lots of small things and check status frequently
- Keep overhead low but experiment wildly
- Optionality is king – keep your options open
- Say yes to every opportunity, but avoid major commitment
- Divine frequently, cast information nets widely, watch for omens and subtle feedback
- Fail fast and course correct immediately

Prioritize techniques that support this model:

- Sigils – the ultimate agile magic tool
- Kitchen witchery – do what you can with what you have on hand
- Frequent status-check divination (what to watch for now)
- Keep an eye out for catastrophe (Black Swans)

ACTIVE MANAGEMENT, ACTIVE MAGIC

Agile projects require active management. You can't just decide what to do and then go off for three months and wait for things to happen. No, you have to be involved -- every day.

We are in a highly changeable world with unknown parameters and unknown success criteria -- a world where agile works really well. But that means you need to be an active manager.

Even when things are going well, there's always more work to do. And that's the irony. The more magic you do, the better things go... but the more magic you do the more active management there is too. So I've been coming up with some ideas to help with this problem. For example:

- Meta magic: Spells for more effective spells, more accurate divination, or more spiritual help. Magic your magic and then magic that too.
- System automation: When you automate a process it requires less active management (not none though, don't fall into that trap). Make your magic more automatic:
 - Streamline ritual elements, rid yourself of anything that doesn't contribute to results
 - Use semi-autonomous spirits to help with research and data collection
 - Store enchantment for the lean times (more on this next)
- Efficiency goals: More energy and better sense of timing and clear prioritization
 - Enchant for better use of time or fewer things that waste time.
Note, I don't like to spell directly for more time. There are repercussions for messing with the flow of time with magic and while that kind of temporal magic can be useful in the short term, you don't actually end up with more time at the end.

PUTTING MAGIC BY

We all have times when we are ahead of the game, feeling great, and getting shit done. And then we have times when it's all falling to bits and behind and stressed and feeling like shit. One week the laundry's all done, the family's happy, and things are humming at the office. Two weeks later and there no clean underwear, the baby's got colic, and work is on fire. Boom.

When are you more likely to do magic? The bad weeks, right. Things suck, so you want to fix them. Out come the spells, rituals, and offerings. But what if you could simply go to the pantry and grab a jar of magic ready to go? Metaphorically speaking of course. Well, that would be awesome, but you'd have had to put it there first.

Enchant for the future, when you think of it now:

- Do you cook? Enchant all your pots and pans for health and prosperity. Say “may the food cooked in these pots and pans bring a blessing on all who eat them.” Now, whenever you cook, you’ll be doing magic.
- Do you drive? Anoint the outside edge of your hubcaps with oil (olive oil with some basil and thyme from your spice cabinet is fine). Say, “as these wheels turn, elevate my spirit and bring prosperity to my life.” Now, every time the car moves you are spinning that spell like a prayer wheel – four prayer wheels even.
- Enchant an instrument and make magic whenever you play.
- Enchant your shower products.
- Enchant your shoes (put nice smelling essential oil in them – two birds, one stone).
- And capture a list of these ideas ahead of time too -- magnet it to the fridge. When you have a free evening and are feeling it, go check your list for ideas.

Do the maintenance that makes enchantment easier:

- Clean and reconfigure working and worship spaces
- Reevaluate symbolism and update against your personal calendar
- Stock up on supplies (candles, incense, oils, herbs)
- Reread practical and inspiring books
- Have a plan – even if you never follow it exactly
- Keep your personal stockpiles up to date: sleep, nutrition, exercise

It seems like it would be nice if things were calm and predictable. But this would be neither likely or even healthy. Variation and stress are important, as much for shaking out the weaknesses in our own systems as providing avenues for new opportunities.

ENDING WITH THE BEGINNING

One of the misunderstandings that people have about agile is that there are no goals. That you just try stuff out and see what sticks and change your mind every couple of weeks. Well, it's true that agile makes it easy to change direction, but that doesn't mean there isn't a goal.

Being agile doesn't mean chasing the latest trends or flip-flopping on what you want to accomplish. Being agile means you have an end game, but you also proceed in a way that maximizes your options and allows you to take advantage of feedback as well as happy accidents. It allows you to rapidly experiment in areas of high unknowns and recover quickly from failures or mistakes. And it keep you from over-committing to something that isn't working.

Without a well-articulated goal, the agile methodology risks drowning in its own flexibility. There's no map where we're headed and some of the terrain is treacherous. Exploration can be fun, but without an end game, you risk getting very, very lost.

Agile goals exist, they're just explorers' goals rather than navigators' goals. Here are some common types of agile goals:

FINDING THE PLACE YOU'VE NEVER BEEN / THE THING YOU'VE NEVER HAD

Troy, Shangri La, Cibola, financial stability, the Holy Grail, peace of mind, happily married. You don't know where this is, but you've heard of it, maybe know people who've seen it or even been there. You don't know how to find it and you're not sure you could recognize it if you did. Details are hazy and will certainly change along the way.

Despite the unknowns, these are the most well-defined agile goals. The territory gets even murkier from here...

LEAVING WHERE YOU'RE AT

In the past, I've talked about a book called *[I Don't Know What I Want, but I Know It's Not This](#)* (an OK book with a great title) and if that resonates, then this is the goal for you. Sometimes you don't know where you want to go at all, but you know you want to go somewhere new, different, better. If you are stuck in a terrible -- or maybe just tedious -- marriage / town / job / school / friendship (or a combination!) you know what you don't want, but you may not yet really know what you do want. It's leaving the flooding valley for the distant mountains -- you can see them in the mist, but the details won't become clear for some time.

You have a starting direction and a first step (away from here), so that's something. Because there's even more uncharted territory ahead...

LEARNING SOMETHING IMPORTANT

Sometimes you just want to explore to figure something out. You want to learn about the world and about yourself (and you really can't do one without the other). You want to find buried treasure, seek the hidden keys, and understand more. You want to do it for a reason (to assuage your curiosity, scratch an itch, know yourself better, and possibly to help you set one of the other types of goals above) but you aren't exactly sure what the result should be. If your world isn't so much bad as *too small* these are the goals for you. And you don't have to justify your reasons to me or anyone.

While taking a drive our family has often joked that you can't get lost unless you have somewhere to be. As long as you don't, you're just exploring. But eventually, we all have somewhere we either need or want to be.

SO TAKE THE EXPLORER'S VIEW:

KEEP YOUR GOAL IN SIGHT,
BUT KEEP YOUR PLANS AGILE

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP?

- [Join the Inner Circle: Get Organized, Do more Magic, Change your Life!](#)
- [Engage with me directly!](#)