

The Elements Festival: Proposed Ritual

Before the ritual:

Ask everyone attending to think about what they appreciate and or love about the Element being celebrated. Bring a ball. Something big and light will be ideal – maybe an inflatable ball.

Introduction:

Before starting, carefully explain each step in the ritual. Make clear that participants can choose how involved they are in each part. Those new to the ritual will feel more comfortable, and those more experienced will be clearer about the process.

Grounding and centring:

Start with a simple breathing meditation or centre and ground in whatever way you feel most familiar. I'm happy to advise you on this if you need suggestions.

Opening the Circle:

Everyone forms a circle, and one of the facilitators holds the ball. The ball is passed sunwise (clockwise) around the circle from one person to the next. Participants are invited to visualize a cord of light moving with the ball from person to person as it's passed around the circle. Some people may want to hold the ball for a little while. Be patient; this indicates that the circle will be solid and focused. Once the ball has completed the circuit of the group, the circle is cast.

Optional: Inviting the elements

The facilitators need to make a call on whether the group will be up for this. I've done this with people who are entirely new to ritual, and they loved it but sense into the needs of your group.

Everyone turns to the direction you have agreed to invite first. Some people call North first, others East, but follow your intuition. The attributions of the elements to compass points are also to be decided by the group. I will typically go with the direction suggested by the location; if there is a river, that's clearly the direction to invite Water! Most people use the attributes below, but this is not fixed.

Invite the Element of Air (East) by whistling. There are old stories of witches whistling up the wind, and sailors never whistle on board for fear of calling a storm.

Invite the Element of Fire (South) by clapping sharply and out of rhythm, like the cracking of a wood fire. Dance about and whoop loudly if you feel like it. Fire is pure energy, and like attracts like.

Invite the Element of Water (West) by making the sound of waves or dripping water. If you sway slowly as if you were at sea, it helps, too.

Invite the Element of Earth (North) by drumming on the ground with your hands or stamping with your feet. Getting down on your knees & slapping the earth with your hands is great for connecting with the Element.

Invite the Spirits of the Place and the Fair Folk. Now the circle is cast and the energies invited, the space and the group are ready for the working.

Honouring the Element:

Participants are invited to open their hands if they're ready to catch the ball and speak or have their hands down if they're not. Participants can speak more than once or choose to refrain from speaking at all. The facilitator - holding the ball - starts by saying one thing they love about the Element, one word or short phrase. They then throw (or roll) the ball to one who has signalled that they are ready. The catcher says one thing they love about the Element and then throws or rolls the ball to someone else in the circle with their hands open. Ideally, try to build up a good pace. This process of catching, speaking and throwing continues until everyone who wants to talk has done so.

Closing the Circle:

This is just the reverse of the process of casting the circle. If you invited the four Elements, turn to each in turn and bid them Thanks and Farewell in the same way as you welcomed them into the circle. Your intent will be different, and the sounds will fall off as you finish each quarter.

Unwind the circle in the opposite direction that you cast it, passing the ball anti-clockwise.

End the ritual with a humming bee hug. Invite everyone to hum together. Optionally, some participants can move closer together and have a group hug in the middle of the circle. Some participants may be uncomfortable with that and can form an outer 'holding' circle. Encourage the hum to get louder until it reaches a natural conclusion. That might be a cheer or a gradual coming to silence.

After the ritual:

The humming will usually be enough to centre everyone but check that everyone is properly grounded. This is especially important if you are working with inexperienced people. Simply sharing food and listening to how people felt about the ritual will be enough to fully ground people.