



The Druid Network

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Tree Meditation, by Jamie Wiseman

The beginnings of this technique were taught to me in the open, on a cliff overlooking the Conwy Valley, in North Wales. Each step was introduced at a later date, so that by the time I reached each following step, I'd been practising the previous for some time. I would encourage you to do the same – it is probably much better to have a good grasp of each part in turn, building your experience and understanding bit by bit, rather than try to rush in and grasp the whole thing at once. As with much of Druidry, practice is key.

This is by far one of the most fundamental and essential techniques I have been taught. It allows a very physical and primal way of feeling my roots – my physicality and presence (or present-ness) on the earth, while allowing me to acknowledge my connections to the things around me.

Begin by sitting down. Preferably on the floor, but just sitting down will do.

Relax, and feel where the ground holds you. Feel heavy. Feel where you touch the ground, and where the energy of the ground – its gravity – gives you weight and solidity. Feel it around you, when you move your body, feel where it moves downwards where there isn't any effort at all, where your weight is held naturally. Then notice your breath. We naturally relax on the outbreath. As you notice the pattern of your breathing, feel your outbreath as a letting go, and as you breathe out each time, feel yourself breathing downwards – your weight settling down each time.



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The next step requires that you employ your imagination a little. As you continue to use your breath as a tool to focussing downwards, with each outbreath, feel your roots grow. Do this as a relaxation, rather than as a push of growth. We grow naturally when we are asleep, rather than when we expend effort, and this is how to grow roots – just by relaxing downwards. Start by feeling just one root grow – a tap root, perhaps. Let this find its depth, maybe curling around rocks, maybe encountering other things in the earth beneath you. Then grow one or two more – maybe growing out from your tap root, or perhaps exploring different directions. Remember throughout that your breathing is key to your root-growing. Relax your growth through your outbreath.

When you feel secure with your roots – perhaps with them spread out around you, like a beech tree, or perhaps with one strong tap root and just a few others, you can start to use your inbreath. As trees draw upwards, they take nourishment from the earth, and so it is with your inbreath. Still remembering to relax downwards with the outbreath, use the inbreath to start to breathe nourishment up your root system, and into your body. You might find it helpful to breathe to a count, but I find it most useful just to breathe as naturally as possible and feel the breath, and the nourishment rising like sap, as fully as I can.

The meditation so far can be used as a powerful way of centering yourself on its own. However, the next steps can be used to integrate yourself into your environment..



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Once you're comfortable with the sap rising within you, giving you new energy, you can begin to use the energy to grow a canopy. Here's where you'll really become aware of what kind of tree you might be. Start small at first, just growing small shoots. Remember that you only need to grow on the outbreath, keeping the sap rising in you on your inbreath. If you feel like it, you can grow bigger branches, maybe leaves, maybe even blossom, if you really feel like it. You may just feel like a small winter blackthorn, sparsely covered, and prickly. Or you might be a huge ash tree, all towering and tall.

When you've grown all the canopy you want to, feel where you touch the things around you – where your canopy touches other things, and where your root system intertwines with other systems. As you breathe in and out, how do you interact with those things? If you're doing the meditation in a group, how do you interact with the people on either side of you?

When you're ready, open your eyes and acknowledge the things around you. Again, if you're in a group, actively acknowledge the people on either side of you. Move slowly and don't talk for a little while. See if you can move without shifting the root system you've created.

Variations

Some people find it difficult to practice this meditation indoors, or on floors above ground level. Personally I've never had a problem with being able to send roots into the earth from there – after all what we're using is the earth's Nemeton – its energy, rather than the earth physically. However a technique you might like to try is to send roots to the edges of the building you're in, and to trail them down the outside, like ivy. This can sometimes kick the imagination into building the sense of nourishment this mediation aims to create.

— magpie