





o, it has been almost a century since Miss Graham wrote those words, and I believe we are more than ever in need of all sorts of ceremonials and household altars. Abbie described her Ceremonials as "a spiritual obeisance to the created beauty of the world". They are can be that, and so much more in our days. I find that they...

- FOCUS OUR ATTENTION IN A HELPFUL WAY, TOWARDS
 THE TASK AT HAND AND ITS DEEPER POSSIBILITIES
- BRING MORE BEAUTY AND PLEASURE TO WHATEVER ACTION WE NEED TO TAKE
- ALLOW FOR TINY DOSES OF QUIET AND SLOWING DOWN
 THAT ADD UP TO MORE PEACE IN THE DAY

Turning an everyday task such as taking medication or supplements, the tending of our skin and body, or making toast...into a pretty (and sometimes meaningful) ritual, that is a Small Ceremonial to me. In Abbie's language, they are gestures of respect to our intentions and hopes for the aspects of our daily rounds.

Some of my herbal tinctures in a favorite antique bowl near the kitchen altar.



And an altar? The official definition is:

A TABLE OR FLAT-TOPPED BLOCK USED AS THE FOCUS FOR A RELIGIOUS RITUAL.

My definition for my home altars would be any spot where the spirit of something is concentrated...a place to hold reminders of what is meaningful to us. While the Small Ceremonials transform some of the mundane details of life, our Everyday Altars are containers for all we hold dear...for ourselves and then widening to embrace our friends and family, the earth and Nature, special occasions...so many possibilities!

In this little book, I will share some of the ways I have learned to add layers of meaning to our every-days with the creating of domestic rituals and house-hold altars.

Celebration of a friend's wedding in our kitchen altar for their visit soon after...some old images and greeting cards and scrabble letters combine simply and festively.









few years ago I created an approach to pill-taking for my mother that

turned a boring, repetitive task into a little. pleasant ritual. We have always decorated matchboxes as a part of Winter Solstice celebrations. It wasn't much of a leap to recognize the pretty boxes for the perfect container for pills and vitamins and anything else that starts out in an ugly plastic bottle.

The Solstice matchboxes are decorated with scraps of paper from my paper trunk, pasted on...sometimes collaged, sometimes with just one im-

age, sometimes layers of collaged bits...the possibilities are rather endless! For the pill-boxes, the fronts and backs can be decorated in the same

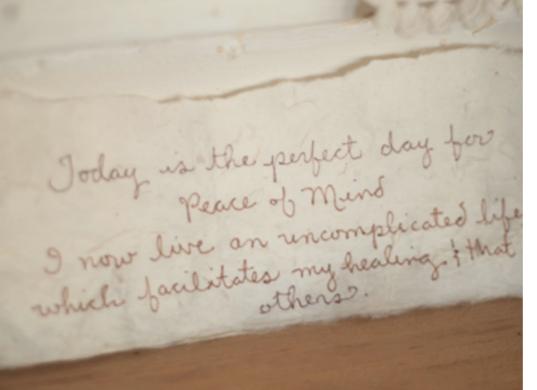
fashion, with the addition of the labels with the days of the week added to the side.

At the end of this book, you will find a print to download and use to easily make your own decorated pill-boxes. I want to make it easy for you to enjoy the transforming of a mundane task into a small ceremonial...and to add a bit of joy to your every-days.

When it was time to figure out something for







myself, I chose a different approach using containers and placement. The bottles with my herbal tinctures were placed in a favorite bowl, lined with a old linen napkin. This was placed by the kitchen altar and near a window, along with a pretty glass and decanter of water.

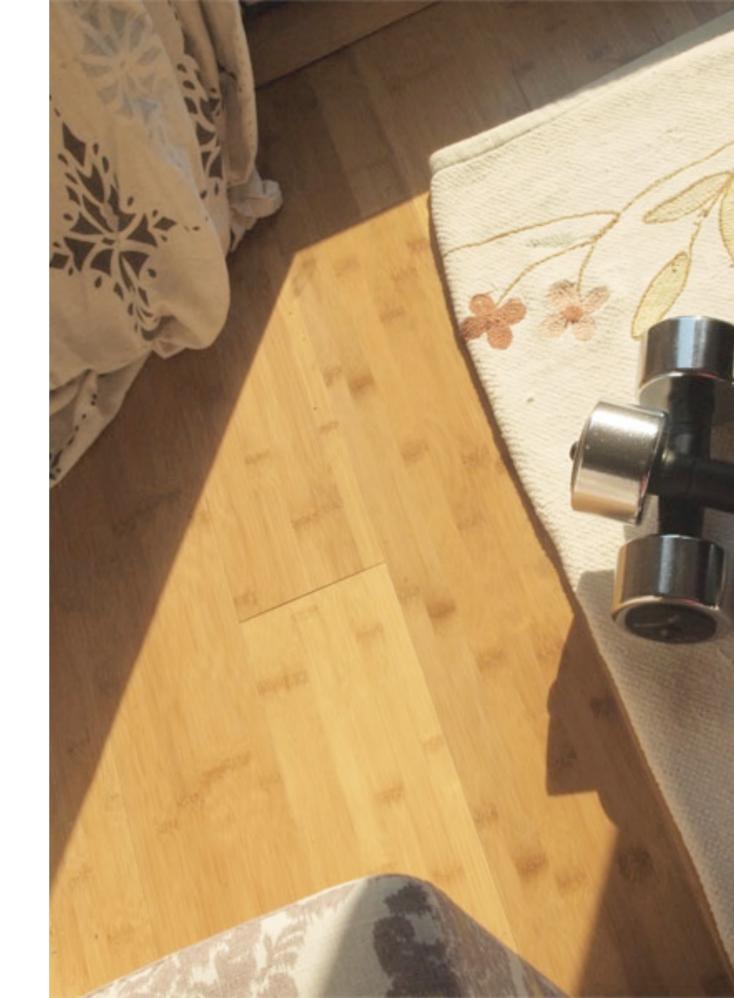
My remedy-taking time became a lovely pause in my day when I spend a few moments pouring and sipping as I gaze out the window or at the affirmation and seasonal tokens in the altar.

Things to consider for your own tending ceremonials

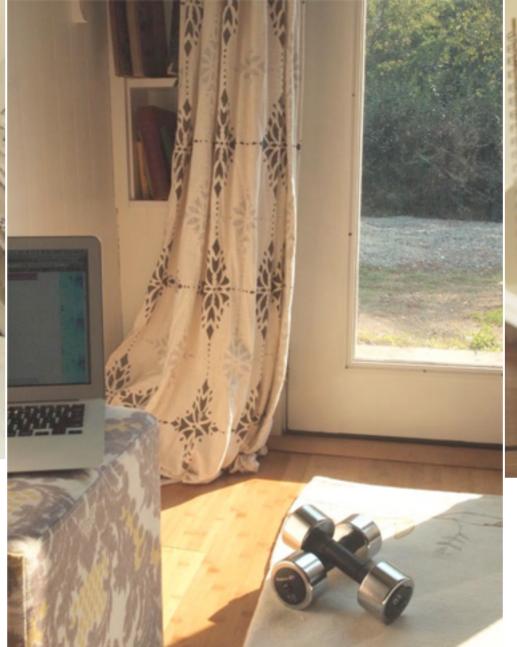
- CHOOSE CONTAINERS AND VESSELS THAT
 PLEASE YOU & THAT FEEL GOOD TO HANDLE
- PLACE OBJECTS NEARBY TO DRAW YOUR AT-TENTION AND REMIND YOU TO TAKE YOUR MEDICINE AND REMEDIES
- BRING AS MUCH LIGHT & ALLURE INTO CRE-ATING THE SETTING AS YOU CAN-YOU ARE WORTH IT!

My morning ritual was a long time in its evolution from "doing my exercises" to the Small and Very Important Ceremonial it has become in my days. In fact, it is not truly a "small" ceremonial any longer, but instead, is composed of several of them...put together.

- -The bowing to the familiar view out the patio doors (literally or figuratively or both!), taking in the location of the sun in the sky...whether the small rabbit is in the long grass or not this morning...greeting the hens...
- -The exercises that I begin promptly so as not to lose the will to do them, but invariably find I am enjoying as I stretch and lift weights and stretch again. Sometimes remembering to be grateful that I am able to take care of myself in this way.
- -The MEDITATION TIME...tho' I just call it my quiet time, when I sit and stare at my familiar view again, until my eyes close and my hands open...taking in the view of myself this time...greeting whatever I find there...









-The NOTEBOOK AND PENCIL ceremonial, when I plan my day in the peace and solitude the morning ritual has created.

My morning Ceremonial was several years in the making. When it started, I was doing my set of exercises on the living room rug with dogs and children stepping over and around me. I slowly learned how important it was to begin my day in solitude and used time and space to get myself that element.

I even extend it now to not checking email or blogs until I head back into the kitchen for cof-

fee and breakfast.

These small, personal ceremonials seem to have many of the same qualities that Abbie Graham wrote of in the quote that started this little book...slowing down, quiet, and just enough peace to let beauty and intention and awareness blossom.



Zotions and creams placed on a pretty cloth, on a dressing table with a chair...instead of the bathroom counter can make a ceremonial of tending our skin...

decorated match-box set near the candle adds a ceremonial air to the lighting of it...

Even the making of toast was elevated when we moved the toaster to its own dresser-top near the window, with a small stack of pretty plates and everything else needed near at hand.



If you are new to altar-making, you may wonder how to begin. I always begin with what I have. You will see as you turn the pages, that most any surface can become an altar...a shelf (or

corner of it), pianotop, windowsill, bedside table, bowl or saucer. The center of the dining table is a classic and the back of the toilet a possibility.

My first altars
were on dresser
and table-tops, and
evolved out of the
nature-tables we
created in our



home-school. My most recent altar is a decaying box found in the woods, moss-adorned and all. This was my husband's first version and on the right is it's incarnation for a blessing I did early one morning on the summery porch.





The elements that make up an altar are limitless, but I have found that the altars that mean the most are those created from things that have meaning and significance...gifts from nature, handmade vessels, photographs and treasured pictures, keepsakes and simply crafted tokens...

A candle is almost always welcome, a soft fold of fabric can transform, a glass vessel filled with water will catch the light. Some altars will stay the same for a long while...some will change as inspiration strikes or your desires or intentions shift. It is the most delightful sort of domestic puttering, to create and arrange in the small world of an Everyday Altar...



My dressing table altar

-with tokens of motherhood and femininity

-the bowl of letters always ready for the prayerful arrangements that spell out people and situations I want to keep in mind...and heart

-my favorite altar book:

The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady by Edith Holden



make a lovely enclosure and the start of a countertop altar. This is Tasha Tudor's A Time to Keep...a favorite when my children were young in our seasonal altars.

The second secon

with it's empty nest and turtle shell, was made quickly made to inspire me to get on with the spring cleaning of my own nest-shell...far from empty, and ready for some scrubbing and polishing.

LITTLE GREY RABBIT'S SPRING-CLEANING PARTY BY ALISON UTTLEY

The altar below,



spontaneous
and simple altar
with the very
first spring
flowers...





spontaneous altar made one evening in need of encouragement at the stove...with my grandmother's saucer and a votive candle.



A few books, flowers and candlelight brought together to honor Miss Read, a favorite author, upon the news of her death...





I've created a page with the days of the week and some illustrations to get you started. If you click this link, it will take you to a page with the downloadable page of matchbox labels.

If you have a Mac, you simply drag it to your desktop, then open and print. On my computer it prints from Preview. If you have a PC, I understand that you right click, save to a file, open the file and print.

I collage and paste the fronts and backs of the matchboxes first and then add the day labels. Deckle-edged scissors give a prettier finish to these, and there is room between each day to simply cut up the middle between each one for the right size. As for the right width, if you cut with the Wednesday morn and eve as your widest part (and perhaps an eighth of an inch on either side) the labels will fit nicely the length of the striking portion of the matchbox. It is easy to trim after you've pasted if anything hangs over.

It is fun to rummage amongst all your saved bits of paper and old calendars and catalogs to cover the little matchboxes with your own tiny collages. The photos in this ebook can give you some ideas. And, please, always try to use recycled and treefree papers.

Enjoy in good health!



If you would enjoy more of the beauty and inspiration I hope you have received from this ebook, please join me at my private membership site,

<u>Wisteria & Sunshine</u>



