



## Smudging

**A word to the wise:** it's important to hold pure and focused intention while you perform a smudging. Before you begin any purification ritual like this, make sure you're fully present.

- 1) You'll need: a clay bowl or abalone shell, a few leaves of your dried herb of choice (or a blend), a flame, and an open hand or feather.
- 2) Gently separate any stems or buds from the leaves of your dried herbs (only the leaves or blades are used in this process). Then place the leaves into your smudging vessel – clay bowl or sea shell.
- 3) If you are inside, open the windows in the space you are in, creating a flow of air from outside.
- 4) Using a match or lighter, ignite the herbs and let them flame for 20 to 30 seconds before sweeping your hand above them to extinguish any fire. (I've been taught that using the breath to blow out the fire is not the proper way.) Tendrils of smoke should be steadily rising from the smoldering herbs now.
- 5) It is customary to smudge oneself first before moving on to others and the surrounding space. Using a cupped hand, draw the smoke around you. Starting from the top, bring the smoke over and around your head, down your torso, all the way to your feet. Make sure to pay attention to your breathing while doing this. Slow and relaxed.
- 6) Once you are finished with yourself, use your feather or hand to waft the smoke gently into the corners of the room and over any plants or pieces of furniture. My friend Santiago once advised that we need to be present with the smoke and watch carefully how it behaves and flows around specific people and objects. When we are fully aware, we'll notice that it moves differently as it touches certain things. There is information there.
- 7) Once you have finished smudging, tradition tells us that the ashes of the spent herb should be brought outside and returned to the soil. Call it superstition if you'd like, but many tribes believe that the charred residue carries its own energy and must be given back to the earth.