

MOURNING IS THE WORK

Art and Ritual-Based Practices for Educators to
Metabolize Grief

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Art by Mer Young

All of my pain is a spider
I've learned not to crush
with the heel of my shoe
but to guide with a page
of my journal
into an empty glass
asking questions about its life,
its purpose, as I walk
careful out to the garden
and rest it down on the earth.
My pain, how happy it is
to leave me whenever
I treat it kind.

—ANDREA GIBSON

— RECALLING THE FIVE GATES OF GRIEF —

- Everything we love we will lose
- The places that have not known love
- The sorrows of the world
- What we expected and did not receive
- Ancestral grief



— RECALLING THE FIVE GATES OF GRIEF —

- How has understanding our grief through these gates strengthened your relationship to your own grief?
- What wisdom have you been able to connect to through this framework? Through our practice together?
- What feels like it needs more space? More tending to?





PRACTICE:
Oracle Cards



Step One:
Stilling yourself to listen.

Close your eyes and invite the spirit/energy of your ancestors into this space.

Soften to your own deep wisdom and knowing.



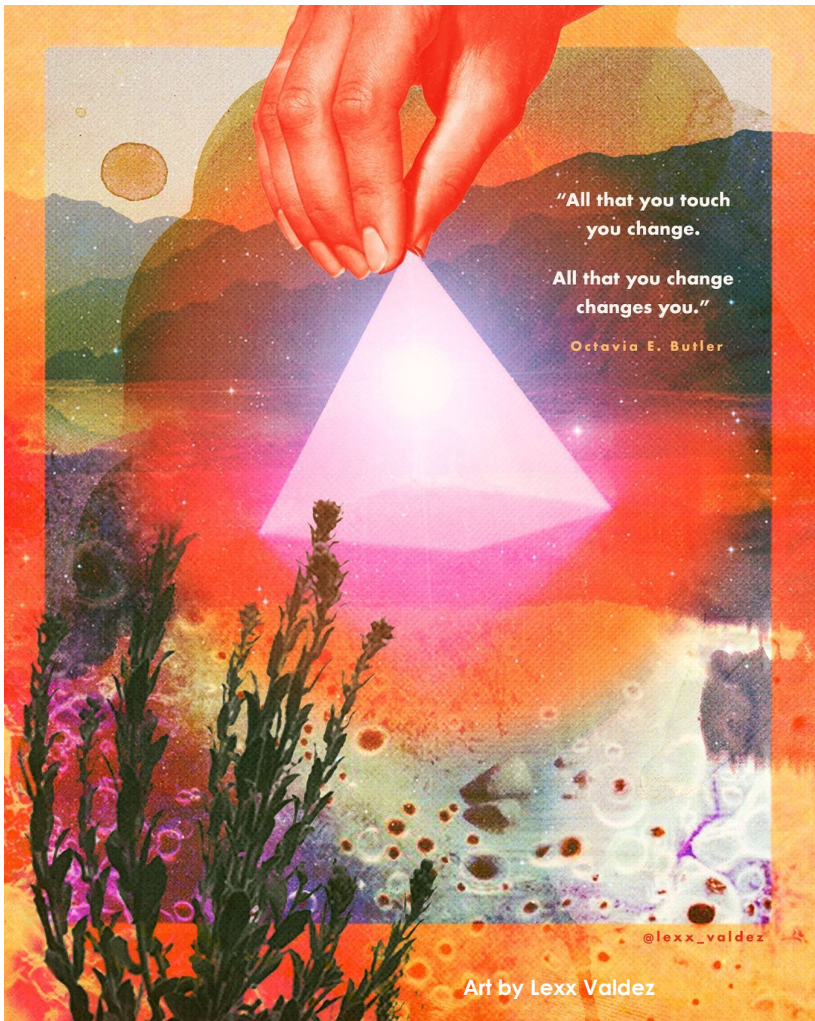
**Step Two:
Connecting to curiosity.**

Gently ask within:

*What wants to be revealed to
me right now?*

Let curiosity, not certainty be your
guide.

1



2





**Step Three:
Interpreting the card.**

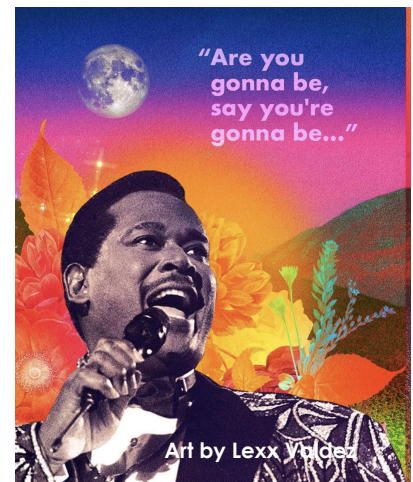
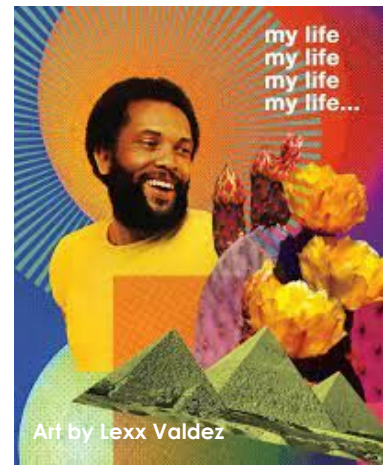
Notice what stands out—words, imagery, feelings.

What message or reflection is this card offering you?



Create.

Art by Mer Young





Art by Lexx Valdez

Instructions on Not Giving Up

Ada Limón, 1976

More than the fuchsia funnels breaking out of the crabapple tree, more than the neighbor's almost obscene display of cherry limbs shoving their cotton candy-colored blossoms to the slate sky of Spring rains, it's the greening of the trees that really gets to me. When all the shock of white and taffy, the world's baubles and trinkets, leave the pavement strewn with the confetti of aftermath, the leaves come. Patient, plodding, a green skin growing over whatever winter did to us, a return to the strange idea of continuous living despite the mess of us, the hurt, the empty. Fine then, I'll take it, the tree seems to say, a new slick leaf unfurling like a fist to an open palm, I'll take it all.