

Innana's Descent into the Underworld and The Hero's Journey:

Notes from Pam England's blogs birthpeeps

"The Hero's Journey is divided into three phases: **Preparation, Ordeal and Return**. I like to further divide the Preparation Phase into Unconscious Preparation and Conscious Preparation. The symbolic Ear in the upper right-hand corner of the painting, along the line that divides the Unconscious and Conscious phases of Preparation in this mandala, represents the archetypal Call... The Call which invokes the Conscious Preparation Phase."

Preparation:

"Rules and beliefs are tethered to emotion, memory, and longing. And some of the Rules the child makes up because they don't know the Rule, or the Rule they were given doesn't fit... "

As you prepare, I invite you to think about the birth worker's journey with a mother heading into the underworld. What are your temples and agreements that influence you on this journey? Which agreements do you have that you can leave behind and purposefully abandon as they are no longer serving you?

The Call:

"The would-be hero is Called to make the journey "home," to Love. There are three mini-phases of the Call: **Hearing the Call, Refusing the Call, and Answering the Call.**"

"From where does the Call come? The Call comes from Love--to Love; Love is constantly, relentlessly calling to us."

As a birth worker, you have at some point been called to do the work that you do. You may have refused it at some point as well. Some of us consider refusing it after a difficult birth. "I should be a welder or waitress." With birth work, we constantly question this journey, because, it isn't always easy. But there are many moments - maybe after you process that difficult birth - that you know this is your path. Or you know how this work fits into your journey in this life.

Your Suitcase full of Assumptions and Agreements and real stuff:

How do you as a birth worker prepare to support a mother or family on their journey? What tools or resources do you bring with you? How can these tools help her or you as you guide her through that underworld or inner world? A ball, essential oils, a tub, rebozo? Who are you as a

birth worker without these tools? What inner tools do you have? When have you experienced using those inner tools?

How do you assist mothers in their tasks of conscious and unconscious preparation?

“These tasks do not include buying baby things or showing up for prenatal appointments. No, these tasks are of a different nature; these tasks prepare the pregnant woman (and the father/ other mother) for her new role as a mother.... Again this is beyond preparation to be a good health or baby product consumer.”

First task of preparation includes leaving “home” for the mother. This may be leaving the agreements or assumptions of the past, the family, others around the mother. Home is what is safe, assumed.

The Ordeal:

When the Ordeal begins, one way to go is to embrace it, to dive in. Another way is to wait, to dip your toe in the water to test the water... or wade in slowly.

Initiates can cautiously wait, wade, or dive in. *Who* decides? At what moment do we know...? What influences determine how we cross this Threshold from planning, comfort, and "knowing" into the Unknown, the Ordeal that will forever change us, inform us, and initiate us.

There is no way we can completely understand the mother’s journey - even if we’ve had our own . We don’t know what is buried or might show up under the lake. What wounds were never kissed.

The Return: See the gates of return on other handouts.

Question: If mom is on a Hero’s Journey, what is the role of the birth worker in each of these phases?
