



Return to the Dark: A Winter Solstice Ritual



RITUAL FOR RELEASE, REST & RENEWAL

A self-guided ritual by Tavia Tinsley





SACRED HEALER
TAVIA TINSLEY

I create rituals for those who are learning to listen to their bodies, their shadows, and their deeper truths. My work is shaped by yoga, somatic practice, journaling, and shadow integration, with a deep reverence for pleasure as wisdom. I

believe healing is not about fixing ourselves, but about remembering our belonging. This offering is an invitation to return to yourself—gently, honestly, and on your own terms.

WELCOME

The Winter Solstice is the longest night of the year– a sacred doorway into stillness, shadow, deep listening, and honest release. In so many traditions, this is the time when we return to the dark not as something to fear... but as a place of restoration, truth, and rebirth.

**The dark holds wisdom.
The quiet holds clarity.
The slowing down holds medicine.**

This ritual was created to help you soften into that medicine from wherever you are– your home, your bedroom, your altar, your favorite chair. You don't need anything fancy. You don't have to be "ready." You just need a willingness to meet yourself gently and honestly.

As you move through this ritual, you are invited to descend into your inner winter: the parts of you that have been tired stretched... over-giving... carrying too much... hiding your truth... or holding what was never yours.

Here, in this dark, you get to put it down.

This is a time for release.
A time for remembering.
A time for reclaiming your power and your softness.

Move slowly.
Trust your body.
Let your shadows speak.
And know that you are held– even in the dark.

I'm honored to guide you through this moment of turning inward.

Blessed Solstice, beloved,

 Tavia

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR SPACE

CREATE YOUR NEST

Choose a quiet spot where you won't be disturbed.

Dim the lights or use soft lighting— a candle, lamp, or string lights work beautifully.

Arrange a comfortable seat, floor setup, or cozy place to lie down. Add a blanket if you like warmth or weight.

GATHER YOUR ESSENTIALS

Journal + pen

A few small slips of paper for the release ritual

A fire-safe bowl, water bowl, or trash bin for tearing/releasing

A candle (or any light source) for the Solstice moment

A warm beverage (tea, cacao, or simply water)

OPTIONAL ENHANCEMENTS

If you want to deepen the atmosphere:

A pillow, shawl, or soft item to hold

Scent: incense, essential oils, or a simmer pot

Music: a playlist that feels spacious, calm, or wintery

Altar objects: stones, greenery, photos, or anything meaningful

SET THE TONE

Silence your phone or turn on Do Not Disturb

Take a few slow breaths in your space

Whisper a simple intention like:
"This place is safe. I am held. I am ready to journey inward."

**You're ready –
everything else will
meet you inside the
ritual.**

OPTIONAL TAROT CARD PULL FOR INSIGHT

This ritual does not require cards.

If you don't work with tarot or oracle decks— or don't feel called tonight— you may skip this page entirely.

If you do feel drawn, this card pull can offer gentle reflection and symbolic insight as you enter the dark.

CHOOSE YOUR DECK

You may use a traditional tarot deck, oracle deck or any symbolic deck you trust. There is no “right” deck— only what feels resonant in your body.

Before pulling, shuffle & clear your deck, take a breath and silently ask:
What wants to be revealed from my shadow today?

ONE CARD

Pull one card and place it in front of you.

Reflect or journal:

What is my shadow asking me to notice right now?

What part of me wants acknowledgment rather than fixing?

How does this card reflect both challenge and wisdom?

THREE CARDS

Pull three cards and lay them in a row.

Card 1: What's Beneath the Surface
What hidden feeling, pattern, or truth is ready to be seen?

Card 2: The Gift in the Dark
What wisdom, protection, or power lives inside this shadow?

Card 3: How to Meet It
What quality, action, or attitude will help me engage this part with care?

Notice images, words, body sensations, or emotions that arise. Let the cards inform your journaling — not override your intuition.

Your inner knowing is the primary guide.

When ready, place the cards aside and continue the ritual.

RITUAL OVERVIEW



ARRIVING & GROUNDING

SOMATIC SOFTENING

SHADOW SELF-REFLECTION

BREATHWORK FOR DESCENT

MIRROR RITUAL

RELEASE & SEED WRITING

CLOSING THE DARK

AUTHOR'S NOTE

RESOURCES & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NON-SHARING AGREEMENT

ARRIVING & GROUNDING

Settle into a comfortable place where your body feels supported.

Offer yourself stillness or gentle movement.

Let your breath soften and deepen.

When you're ready, begin:

GROUND

Sit, stand, or lie down.
Notice the surface beneath you— steady and holding you.

Inhale slowly through the nose, exhale through the nose.
Let your breath regulate and settle your body.

Visualize roots growing from your feet down into the earth— through floor, soil, stone— until they reach a deep, ancient place.
Feel the earth holding you.

Then gently draw that energy back up the roots into your body, returning to this moment.

CLEAR

Imagine a large waterfall above your head.

Let cool, cleansing water pour down through you.

See it washing away: tension, doubt, fear, heaviness, anything not yours.

Let it rinse your whole field clean.

Release the image when it feels complete.

ARRIVING &
GROUNDING
CONTINUED

PROTECTION

Bring awareness to your belly—the center of Manipura, your sacral chakra.

See a warm, glowing light forming there.

Let it expand through your body, then outward into a protective bubble around you. If you'd like, reach out and feel its boundary.

Let this light extend to your room, home, neighborhood—as far as feels right.

CALLING IN SUPPORT

Invite any guides, ancestors, divine beings, or protective energies you work with.

Ask for support, clarity, and protection during your ritual.

RETURNING

Notice your breath again. Notice the room, the air, the way your body rests.

When you're ready, gently open your eyes.

YOUR RITUAL BEGINS.

SOMATIC SOFTENING

5-10 MINUTES

SHOULDER MELT

Roll shoulders forward 5-7 times, then backward 5-7 times.

Inhale, lift the shoulders. Exhale, draw your shoulders down.

Feel the upper body soften.

SPINAL WAVE

On the inhale, lift chest slightly.

On the exhale, round through the spine. Repeat 6-8 times.

JAW & NECK UNWIND

Gently open & close the jaw, then let it hang loose.

Slow neck circles, 3 each direction.

HEART-BELLY HOLD

Place one hand on heart, one on belly.

Feel your breath move under your palms.

SHAKE & EXHALE

Shake out hands, shoulders, hips, legs- lightly.

Let tension leave the body.

FULL BODY SOFTEN

Sit or lie down.

Let your weight drop into the surface beneath you.

Feel your edges blur into the dark.

TAKE CARE OF YOU

Grab a drink of water, make some warm tea, use the restroom.

Observe how you're feeling, while you're doing these things.

Try to stay silent and present with yourself during this self-care moment.

HOW TO WORK WITH JOURNALING PROMPTS

The following journaling practice is not meant to be completed perfectly or in order.

These prompts are invitations. Follow what feels alive, charged, or curious. If a question doesn't resonate, let it rest and move on. Trust your intuition more than the page.

Write freely. Let your hand move faster than your thinking. You may write in fragments, images, or single words. Pause, breathe, return, or stop whenever you need.

THE FOUR PROMPT THEMES

SHADOW DESCENT

These questions invite you into the quieter, hidden, or uncomfortable parts of yourself. This is not about fixing or judging, but about listening. Shadow work asks us to meet what has been exiled or ignored with presence and care.

EXISTENTIAL KINK - INSPIRED

Influenced by Existential Kink by Carolyn Elliott, these questions challenge us to look honestly at the ways we may be unconsciously attached to our struggles, patterns, or pain. Rather than rejecting the shadow, this inquiry asks: What part of me is invested in this? There is no shame here—only curiosity and responsibility.

SOLSTICE RELEASE

These questions support letting go. They help you name what no longer needs to be carried into the returning light. Release is not erasure; it's an act of trust, allowing the dark to hold what you're ready to set down.

SEED OF RETURNING LIGHT

This final theme turns toward nourishment and intention. These prompts ask what you want to tend, grow, or protect as the light slowly returns. Think of these as seeds—living, patient, and tended over time rather than forced into bloom.

Let the dark reveal what it is ready to show you.

SHADOW

SELF-REFLECTION

JOURNALING EXERCISE

What part of me has been hiding in the dark, waiting to be seen?

What truth have I been avoiding because it feels uncomfortable or inconvenient?

What emotions or desires have I labeled “wrong,” “too much,” or “not enough”?

What pattern or cycle have I struggled to break– and what secret pleasure or payoff might be hiding inside it?

What part of me gets something out of this struggle, chaos, or tension?

What would happen if I stopped shaming this pattern and instead honored it as a teacher?

What am I done carrying alone?

What burden am I ready to place gently into the dark?

What old identity or story no longer fits who I’m becoming?

What thoughts or habits feel heavy, cold, or wintered-out?

What am I calling back as the light returns?

What am I ready to nourish or tend slowly over the next season?

What truth about myself feels like a small flame I want to protect?

Where in my life do I want softness, warmth, and renewal?

BREATHWORK FOR DESCENT

Begin by placing one hand on your belly and one on your heart.

STEP 1: BELLY BREATH

Inhale slowly into the lower belly.

Feel it expand like a warm balloon.

This is your grounding breath– the part that tells your nervous system, You're safe.

STEP 2: RIB BREATH

Continue to inhale, sip in a little more air and let it rise into the ribs.

Feel the side body expand.

STEP 3: CHEST BREATH

Without exhaling, sip in a little more air.

Let the breath climb gently toward the heart, chest & shoulders.

STEP 4: SLOW, LONG EXHALE

Release the breath out through the nose or mouth in a long, slow stream.

Imagine the exhale carrying tension, noise, and overstimulation away from you.

Let your shoulders fall.

Let your jaw soften.

Repeat this pattern for 6–10 cycles:

Inhale Belly → Inhale Ribs → Inhale Chest → Exhale Slowly

With each exhale, picture yourself descending one step deeper into the quiet of the dark.

MIRROR RITUAL

Begin seated or lying down in your nest.
Allow your body to be fully supported.

Place your mirror nearby or hold it gently.
You may look into it now, later, or not at all— choice is part of the ritual.

Let your breath guide you inward.

ARRIVE & WITNESS

Bring attention to the breath moving through your body.

Notice sensation— warmth, stillness, tension, softness— without needing to change anything.

When it feels right, meet your own gaze in the mirror.

No performance. No story. No fixing.

Simply notice the eyes and face that have held both your light and your shadow.

Soften your gaze or look away whenever needed.

EMBODIED MOVEMENT & TOUCH

Set the mirror down or keep it nearby.

Invite slow, intuitive movement— gentle swaying, stretching, circling, or stillness.

Let movement arise from sensation rather than thought.

Introduce touch with your hands caressing your body.

Touch with curiosity, not correction.

This is not goal-oriented pleasure.

This is a ritual of self-reverence.

MIRROR RITUAL CONTINUED

TUNE IN & ASK

Reflect silently or aloud:

Where does “yes” live in my body right now?

What sensations want to be witnessed?

How does it feel to touch myself as both dark and light—both divine?

Breath, sound, and pauses are welcome, here.

BELONGING

If emotion or memory arises, allow it to be felt, witnessed & moved the body rather than analyzed.

Place a hand where contact is needed.

Whisper or reflect:

*I am not here to fix myself.
I am perfect, just as I am.*

WINDING DOWN

When the practice feels complete, return to stillness.

If you wish, meet your gaze once more— not to affirm, but to recognize.

Lower the mirror.
Rest your hands on your body or the surface you're on.

In the dark, every part of you belongs.

BEGINNING WRITING

Take a small piece of paper. Write one (or more) thing(s) you are ready to release– something you no longer wish to carry alone.

This may be a belief, pattern, habit, role, fear, wound, or story you've outgrown.

Pause and reflect quietly:

***What has this taken from me?
What has it taught me?
What part of me is ready to let it go?***

Hold the paper between your hands. Feel its weight. Acknowledge its truth.

RELEASE RITUAL

Release the paper in the way that feels right– by safely burning it in a fire-safe bowl, or by tearing it and placing the pieces into water or the ground.

Whisper or speak:

***I release you – may you return to the dark.
You no longer belong to me.
So mote it be.***

Pause and notice your body after releasing.

SEED WHAT WILL GROW

On a new piece of paper, write one or two seeds you wish to nurture moving forward.

These may be intentions, desires, ways of being, boundaries, pleasures, or qualities you want to tend.

Hold this paper at your heart or belly. Breathe it in.

Whisper or reflect:

I trust what is growing in me.

Keep this paper somewhere meaningful, or place it on your altar.

CLOSING THE **DARK**

Before you rise, gather the last of the darkness around you
like a blanket.

Feel its coolness, stillness, & protection.
Let it press softly against your skin.

Close your eyes and whisper:

**Thank you, dark.
Thank you for what you held.
Thank you for what you revealed.
Thank you for what you carried
away.**

Imagine the dark gently closing like a door– not shutting
you out, but completing a sacred cycle.

Imagine a small flame in your chest– a spark of returning
light– glowing brighter with each breath.

Place your hand on your heart and say:

**I return to myself.
I return to my body.
I return to the light.**

Take one more breath.

Let the ritual settle.

When you're ready, open your eyes.

Your ritual is now complete.



A NOTE FROM TAVIA

This ritual was created with a deep reverence for the dark— the kind of darkness that holds us, witnesses us, and invites us back into the truth of who we are. Return to the Dark is a journey into your own inner landscape: your shadows, your desires, your hidden truths, and the parts of you that have been waiting quietly for your attention.

As you move through these practices, know that everything here is an invitation, not an expectation. You get to set the pace. You get to decide what feels supportive for your body, your heart, your nervous system. Some parts may feel tender. Some may feel powerful. Some may feel unexpectedly pleasurable.

All of that is welcome.

I created this ritual for those who are ready to reclaim the dark as sacred— as a place of wisdom, honesty, and rebirth. May this container help you remember that your shadows are not flaws to fix, but portals to deeper self-love, presence, and liberation. And may you emerge from this ritual feeling a little more whole, a little more softened, and a little more in awe of yourself.

Thank you for trusting me to guide you,

❤️ Tavia

RESOURCES & LINEAGE

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This ritual was shaped by many teachers, traditions, and bodies of wisdom. I believe in naming and honoring the sources that inform my work— not as ownership, but as gratitude. None of this practice exists in isolation. It is made possible by the knowledge, care, and courage of those who have come before us.

EXISTENTIAL KINK

CAROLYN ELLIOTT

Shadow integration, desire as wisdom, & radical self-honesty

URBAN TANTRA

BARBARA CARRELLAS

Embodiment, erotic energy, & consent-based ritual

YOGA LINEAGE & SOMATIC PRACTICES

MANY TEACHERS

Rooted in yoga philosophy, embodied movement, breathwork, and meditation practices learned through formal trainings and ongoing personal practice

USES OF THE EROTIC

AUDRE LORDE

Influenced by the radical self-love practices she writes about and this particular essay

OTHER MODALITIES

Trauma-informed practices, honoring seasonal cycles, earth wisdom, erotic mysticism & somatic experiencing

ETHICS & INTEGRITY STATEMENT

This offering is not a replacement for therapy or medical care. All practices are invitations, not requirements. Participants are encouraged to adapt, pause, or skip any part that does not feel supportive.



NON-SHARING AGREEMENT

PERSONAL USE ONLY

This Winter Solstice ritual guide is an original offering created with care, experience, and intention.

Your purchase supports a small, heart-centered business and allows me to continue creating accessible healing resources.

Please honor this work by keeping it for your personal use only.

Do not share, forward, upload, or distribute this file.

If someone you love would benefit from this ritual, please send them to the purchase link so they can receive their own copy.

Thank you for respecting this container and supporting my work.



AFTER THE DARK

NEED MORE INSIGHT OR SUPPORT?

If this ritual resonated, know that it's part of a larger body of work devoted to embodied healing and self-reclamation.

You're invited to reach out for support, explore upcoming offerings, or follow along for future rituals and reflections.

Connection is always welcome here.

May you carry this work gently into the days ahead.

LIONALCHEMY.COM

