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Appendix A: Guided totem meditation

This meditation may be used to find primary or secondary totems. I have had better success using it for secondaries--if you are going to try to determine a primary with it, multiple performances should be done in order to account for any preconceived notions or unclear results. Keep in mind that you may not see any animal at first. If this occurs, give it a few weeks at least and then try again. Some folks aren't ready to meet a particular totem; others may simply need to work with a different set of entities; still others simply don't get much out of guided meditations and visualizations.

You may either record yourself reading this meditation aloud and play it back or have another person read it to you--preferably someone with a pleasant voice. Nothing ruins a good guided meditation like a deadpan monotone with a cold. As with any other meditation, make sure your setting is quiet and undisturbed and that you can get into a comfortable position that may be held for 15-30 minutes but won't cause you to fall asleep in the meantime.

Make your body become completely still. Don't move any part of your body. Concentrate on being entirely motionless. (Allow at least two minutes for this.)

Now breathe as deeply and slowly as you possibly can, in through the nose and out through the mouth. Create an even, steady flow of air. Feel the tension leave your body with each breath. (Minimum three minutes.)

Feel your body sink into the ground beneath you. If there is a manmade floor, feel yourself pass through it and into the cool Earth below. Feel your body become a part of that Earth, solid and unmovable. (One minute.)

Send the upper half of your body high into the sky. Feel the wind rush around you and the clouds brush against your skin. Feel yourself expand into that vast open space and become a part of the Sky. (One minute.)

Now feel yourself being a part of both the Earth and the Sky, solid and vast, and know that as long as the Earth is beneath you and the Sky above you, no harm may come to you on your journey. (One minute.)

Visualize a natural hole--it may be a burrow in the ground, an open knot in a tree, a space amid branches that leads to the sky above, a hole in the ice over Arctic seas. It may be as large as a stone arch or as small as a single cell. See it before you, and enter into it. (One-two minutes.)

Find yourself led down into a long, dark tunnel. You may be running, floating, flying, swimming or crawling through it. (One minute should suffice.)

At the end of the tunnel is another opening. As you pass through this opening, enter into a natural place in which you are very comfortable. It may be a large field, a forest, a snowy plain, a

body of water, or the broad sky. Explore this place. Note what the natural flora is, what season and time of day it is and how you move through it. (One-two minutes.)

As you wander this place, you see an animal approaching swiftly. Note what sort of animal it is, how it approaches you, whether it seems to be pleased that you are there or acting aggressively. Pay attention to any specific characteristics such a color, size and sex, and whether it is accompanied by others. Note also if it shifts forms, even into another species entirely. (Two minutes.)

Converse with the animal. Ask it why it is there. If it has acted aggressively, make sure you inquire as to the reason. Find out what the animal has to teach you. Ask how you may strengthen the bond with it. (At least three minutes, preferably five to seven or more if desired.)

It is now time to return to the waking world. Thank the animal for its time and teachings, and promise that you will continue the conversation at a later time. If you wish, gift the animal with a food it likes or other boon. Then turn and go back to the tunnel and return back to the upper world. (At least three minutes.)

As you come back out of the tunnel, start to become aware of your body again. Begin to move slowly, starting with your fingers and toes, then working up your limbs, then your torso and finally your neck and head. Save opening your eyes for last. Don't rush it; give yourself plenty of time to come back to physical reality. (Allow as much time as necessary for this; you don't want to get the mental version of the bends by shocking your system with a quick wake-up.)

Once you've recovered, write or sketch what you saw in as much detail as possible while it's still fresh in your mind. Don't worry if it isn't high-quality art or prose; what matters is that it reminds you as vividly as possible of your experience whenever you reflect upon it.

*I must give Peter J. Carroll a big thank-you for *Liber MMM*, which helped to hone my inhibitory meditation skills and enhanced this particular meditation quite a bit. I also have to thank numerous totemic authors, meditation guides and other folks that I've been able to trade ideas and experiences with for inspirations and idea that went into the creation of this meditation.