

Secrets

to a Successful Moon Practice



by Dana
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By **Dana Gerhardt**

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I was born in the fifties—when the threat of nuclear annihilation hung heavily in the air. I’ve imagined the end of the world many times. Whether it came by atomic bomb or the slow poisoning of the planet, I’ve imagined myself surviving. I would travel light with a neo-feral pack of others, trying to restart humanity. My gift would be what I know about the Moon. I don’t mean complicated lunar facts like when to harvest seaweed. I mean simply knowing when and where the Moon will rise each night: over which mountain; at what hour; in what phase.

Study the sky and you’ll learn the Moon is as predictable as the calendar. This is how the ancients told time—by keeping track of Luna’s position in the sky. Every month, the waxing crescent Moon rises at the same hour above the eastern horizon. You’ll likely notice her when she’s setting, above the western horizon just after sunset and a few days after the New Moon. The First Quarter Moon is always high overhead in the early evening. If there’s a quarter Moon above you early in the morning, then it is the Last Quarter Moon. If you go to bed early, you’ll never see the Disseminating Moon at night, but you’ll have a beautiful view of it in the morning.

The Moon’s schedule never varies. But moderns are so out of touch with this way she so reliably nurtures us. I often see art or television shows that depict impossible Moons: like a waxing Crescent smiling through a window at two in the morning. Worse, I’ve met people who thought the Moon was only out at night—every night. When planning evening events outdoors, few consider whether they’ll be moonlight. But Full Moons have long been a time of gathering, because this Moon phase is the only one that lights the entire night, from sunset to dawn.

Luna’s regular appearance is what helps to make Earth feel like home. Connect with the sky and you’ll connect with the part of you that remembers what it was like to be embraced by ever larger circles of mystery—the bodies of the Earth, the Moon, the Sun, the Cosmos.

I’m less inclined now to imagine the end of the world. I see that it is certainly possible—but the Moon has taught me that endings and beginnings are a regular cyclical occurrence. Old worlds keep dying just as new ones are dawning. These days, I like to think of the new world being born. The Moon will be gracefully guiding the lives of that world too. There is hope in that, and I feel it, whenever I see the Moon.

For a quick overview of the Moon’s schedule, visit this article at Mooncircles:
<http://mooncircles.com/moon-astrology-articles/quick-guide-to-moon-phases/>

Secret 2

Follow the Moon's Two Rhythms



The first rhythm the Moon plays for us is the song of high and low tides, formed by her dance around the planet. When Earth was covered in oceans, our ancestors, the first itty bitty life forms, moved to this rhythm daily. High tides carried them far inland; there they clung to rocks or stretched out on the sand. As the tide receded, they paused, renewing themselves, learning what land and air were like, until the next high tide returned them to water, where they would jostle, dance, and recombine with other cells to create new life forms. This lunar rhythm still operates and guides our daily moods. It carries us out and away to new places and experiences. Then it returns us to our home. It invigorates us, drawing us out into the flow. Then it recedes, encouraging our relaxation and rest.

Ocean tides vary depending on their location on Earth and the positions of the Sun and Moon. I suppose one could try to track the formula for our inner tides—but that seems to me rather indirect. These rhythms are held by the body, its inner waters, its energetic pulses. You can feel it directly, so why not just tune in?

Flow naturally through your day (instead of always charging ahead) and you'll discover that your body remembers (and likes) this tidal movement. Like Earth's first life forms, you experience it daily, in your own version of high and low tides. Notice when you're carried into action. When your energy is high, this is your personal high tide. Notice when you run dry and need to pause, absorbing what's around you. This is your low tide. The hour and intensity of the ocean's tides vary throughout the month, depending on the positions of Earth, Sun and Moon (with the Moon being the most important force). The peaks and valleys of your daily mood vary throughout the month as well. Don't resist them. Acknowledge and welcome your tides.

Waxing and Waning

The second rhythm the Moon plays for us is a month-long song of growing and disappearing. For two weeks (from New Moon to Full Moon), the light on the Moon's face is growing. Then (from Full Moon to New Moon) the light on her face gradually disappears. Before there was electricity, before there were candles or even torches and campfires, this waxing and waning of moonlight had a significant effect on the life forms below. The waxing weeks encouraged an increase in activity that climaxed at the Full Moon. During the weeks of the waning Moon, rising later and with less light each night, activity naturally lessened.

We no longer need to plan our activities according to the presence or lack of moonlight. Yet even without our participation, this rhythm is still going on. Why shouldn't we take advantage of this natural planetary pulse?

If we want to initiate a project, we should choose a day when the Moon is waxing, as this helps to draw greater energy and support. The waning weeks are optimum for introspection, for reviewing, analyzing and planning. Gardeners know it's better to plant above-ground plants on waxing Moons and roots on waning Moons. Doctors used to perform surgeries during the waning Moon as a way to minimize blood loss and control infections. The Moon's position is still useful when planning surgeries today, even if your doctor no longer cares. There is much lost information you can recover if you start paying attention to the light of the Moon!

For more, check out these Mooncircles articles:

Waxing Moon Magic: Ripening, Ripening:

<http://mooncircles.com/moon-astrology-articles/waxing-moon-magic-ripening-ripening/>

Waning Moon: Chop Wood, Carry Water:

<http://mooncircles.com/moon-astrology-articles/waning-moon-chop-wood-carry-water/>



During the years I worked in the corporate world, I scurried through my weeks like a hamster on a treadmill. Mondays through Fridays were pledged to my boss, Saturdays were given to errands, perhaps a little pleasure in the evening, while Sundays were for cleaning house and washing clothes. Then it was back to work on Monday, when the grind started all over again. This rhythm was functional, but immensely dissatisfying. Thank goodness that Moon work saved me by reorienting me to an ancient (and ultimately more satisfying) sense of time.

The week is actually a sacred gift from the Moon. The Moon's cycle is divided into four quarters, with each lasting approximately seven days. The lunar weeks are marked by four pivots: the New Moon, the First Quarter, the Full Moon, and the Last Quarter. These turnings, our first "Sabbaths," signaled a time for rest, renewal, and reorientation. When our calendars veered away from the natural lunar flow, these precious Moon days became "Sundays" (ironically named for that other masculine body, it's often a day for worshipping the patriarchal gods). But worse than the spiritual politics, we lost touch with the special quality of each lunar week.

To reclaim these weeks is a radical and rewarding practice. And it's not all that difficult. All you need is a calendar that still marks these lunar Sabbaths as the four phases of the Moon. Over time, you can experience and reclaim the richness of Moon time. You can accelerate your progress by aligning certain activities with the Moon. In time-honored lunar tradition, you can perform certain Moon rituals.

Rituals imply ceremony, but the word also means habits. Doing the same thing over and over makes it a ritual. Your Sabbath rituals can be quite simple: just give yourself ten minutes of alone time; breathe deeply, relax and contemplate the proper aspiration for the time. On the New Moon, invite a sense of spontaneity and adventure. Get an exciting new view of yourself. At the First Quarter Moon, observe what in your life is challenging you to take new action. Wonder what brave thing your warrior self will do in the coming week. On the Full Moon, open the gates of your mind to illumination. Be on the lookout for significant new understandings in the days ahead. At the Last Quarter Moon, aspire to trim and weed yourself of old growth, both inner and outer. Be alert for intimations of the future.

To strengthen your lunar Sabbaths, get in the habit of doing certain activities during its appropriate lunar week. I like to take at least one brief "walkabout" during the week of the New Moon. I set out by car or by foot with no other intent than to see what will happen. During the First Quarter Moon week I try to do at least one thing that scares me.

And I make sure to congratulate myself on my courage. I hope to grab at least one contemplative moonrise sit during the week of the Full Moon, even if I'm in a busy house with no Moon views. When I can remember, during the Last Quarter week, I throw away something I no longer need. I wish I would remember to do this more often—but obviously, something in me resists making this a habit!

There's always more to learn when working with the Moon. Feel free to borrow any of my weekly rituals; even better, come up with your own. You can keep track of the Moon's phases on our website or through my monthly Moon workshop:

<http://mooncircles.com/store/moon-workshop/>

More from the Mooncircles archive:

Change with the Quarter Moons:

<http://mooncircles.com/moon-astrology-articles/change-with-the-quarter-moons/>

Does the Full Moon Really Make You Crazy?

<http://mooncircles.com/moon-astrology-articles/does-the-full-moon-make-you-crazy/>

On the Value of Moon Rituals:

<http://mooncircles.com/moon-astrology-articles/the-value-of-moon-rituals/>

Secret 4

Enjoy the play of
daily Moon signs.



I have a fair collection of Moon books. I also get plenty of letters and emails from people describing their personal experience with Moon signs. What I've noticed is there's lots of intriguing advice—but very little agreement. Advice in one book often differs from another. What works for one person won't be true of the next who writes. Sometimes what is said is astonishingly accurate. Weak digestive tracts do flare on a Virgo Moon! The Moon is in Gemini and everyone's so chatty! And yes, the air does feel damp this Pisces Moon!

But at the next Moon in Pisces, the day may be no different than the Aquarius Moon's weather. Or on Virgo's Moon you'll look in vain for people popping DiGels and Tums. Worse, the office will be quiet and sullen in Gemini; then it erupts in a party mood in Capricorn, of all things. Such contradictions are inevitable whenever we look too far outside our personal experience of the signs. If we get too attached to the expert's rules and predictions, we'll miss the primary conduit through which Moon information actually comes—through our bodies and intuition.

Science works on the premise that anything true must be true at all times in all contexts. But Moon work is not like that. The Moon joins in the dance of each of our varied lives and offers countless reflections. On any moonlit night on Earth, there are millions upon millions of Moons, reflected in oceans and lakes, in windows and mirrors, in rain puddles or strips of chrome. It is the same for each day's Moon sign. There are millions of ways that it's expressed. We are not simply robots, caught in the Moon's factory. We are co-creators—dancing with living archetypes. But first we have to learn to recognize them.

Twice while shopping at the local health food store, I noticed the scent of someone's perfume hanging in the air... it was delicious. I happily followed its trail through the aisles. The first time the Moon was in Aquarius, the second time in Libra. Both are air sign Moons. Traditional astrology assigns to air the qualities of "hot" and "moist." This combination makes me think of a rain forest, teeming with activity, lush with sound and scents. I wondered if scents indeed lingered in the air more potently on air sign Moons.

I'd never read about any of this in a Moon sign book, but I recalled how at home, the same scented candle would seem to fill the room on some days, yet on other days its scent was hardly noticeable. I experimented. It was difficult measuring something as subjective as the intensity of a scent, but more often than not, I found that scents were indeed more noticeable on air Moon days. Scientists would scoff of course, but as a daughter of the Moon, I continue to enjoy my discovery anyway.

Learn the traditional expectations for Moon signs and then be prepared to play with them—or rather, watch the Moon play with you. The goal of Moon work is to steady yourself enough to discover your own reflection of the Moon's movement. This is the emphasis of my monthly Moon Workshop <http://mooncircles.com/store/moon-workshop/>, where along with learning the “rules,” students are encouraged to observe, play, sense and record the natural flow of their own experience. I've been delighted by the many emails I've received from students you've watched the Moon dancing in their lives and been happily and irrevocably changed by this experience.

What sign is the Moon in today? And what does that mean? Visit our *Today's Moon* page and see! <http://www.mooncircles.com>

From the Mooncircles archive:

Tips for working with Moon Signs:

<http://mooncircles.com/moon-astrology-articles/tips-for-working-with-moon-signs-elements-and-stones/>

Secret 5

Know when it's
good to be a quitter.



*M*y workshop students tell me they're disappointed in themselves. They haven't kept up with their Moon work as much as they'd wanted to. The issue of "quitting" is rich and complicated and quite relevant to the Moon's teachings.

While I love my enthusiastic students who are earnest about their practice, I also love the ones who let it slide. For Moon work involves both: coming and going, focusing and falling away. The Sun is always the same: a bright orb rising in the morning and setting at night. But the Moon changes... sleeping in, staying out all night, disappearing altogether.

To engage in Moon work with steady discipline means you're bringing a solar attitude to your practice. You're thinking like the Sun. This isn't always bad, but if it's all that you're doing, you'll eventually go nova and burn out. Moon work follows a subtler and more mysterious rhythm. It waxes and wanes just like Luna herself. Let it happen. And when you lose your connection to the Moon, let the moment you realize this has happened become the bell announcing you're now ready to return. Don't beat yourself up when you've just been called awake!

That said, being aware is always better than going numb. It's good to notice when you're needing to fall away and why. Keep a record of these times. This is important information. If you skip out during the same Moon phase each cycle, likely there's something in the work of that phase that challenges you. The Moon's cycle is oriented towards growth. Its cycle is designed to support positive changes. But if you regularly numb out during a particular phase, chances are your Moon work isn't the only thing you're letting slide.

Quitting Bad Habits

Of course quitting isn't always a bad thing. There are some things we're dying to quit—like our self-destructive habits. Moon work can be quite an ally in this endeavor. Traditional lunar wisdom says it's easier to quit bad habits on a dark or "Balsamic" Moon (which occurs at the end of the cycle—in the three to four days before the New Moon). Try this and see for yourself. I've found that the dark Moon can often be a sleepy time, when it's hard to motivate myself to make bold new changes. Breaking free of bad habits may require an act of will that is better fueled by the New Moon. So if the "quit on a dark Moon" principle doesn't work for you, here's an alternative approach.

Don't quit yet—but start your mourning. Grieve whatever habit or attachment you want to release. Pretend you've already released it and see what it's like to emotionally let it

go. Jump into bed for at least one irrational nap and let all of your feelings come up. Consider how you love this habit. And why you hate it. Imagine life without it. Feel the fear. Imagine yourself beyond the fear, happy, strong and free. Wander through the dark forest of all your feelings, without repressing them or getting stuck. Once you've explored them all, conclude with a simple clearing ritual. Print what you want to release on a piece of paper; then tear, burn, or flush it away. Call in new space, by discarding something you no longer need. Enjoy the new energy that flows as a result. Breathe it in as an encouragement for the new you.

Significant changes are often better accomplished during the New Moon, Crescent or First Quarter phases. But you have to prepare yourself first. And that's what the end of each cycle is for. As the Moon wanes, awareness of what you no longer need waxes. You can see what's standing in your way. You will probably have to slow down in order to receive this insight. The dark Moon is like one of those mountain ramps for rescuing brakeless runaway trucks. Veer onto this dark Moon ramp and let your careening momentum run itself out. After you come to stillness, new visions will come.

Whenever you genuinely release your baggage, you receive a blessing. Use the Moon cycle's end to prepare your next beginning. Commit to resting—and releasing something old—at the end of every Moon cycle. Do this for one year and I guarantee that your life will come closer to the one you've always dreamed about.

From the MoonCircles archive:

What phase are we in today? Visit MoonCircles and see follow the ***Today's Moon*** links: <http://mooncircles.com/>



Sometimes astrology is scary. You might have blissfully spent all your days unaware of void-of-course Moons, but once you hear about them, you're panicky. The news about void-of-course Moons does sound hopeless. Anything begun then goes nowhere. Your job interview won't bring employment. Your visit to your mother-in-law won't earn any goodwill. Convene a business meeting and all plans made then will fall apart later.

A void is a gap, an empty space. It suggests a state of being without. Astrologically, the Moon is void when in a particular sign, she's without connections (or "aspects") to the other planets. These gaps occur before the Moon changes sign, and can last from a few minutes, to a few hours, to a couple of days, depending on the other planets' positions. If you ask a horary astrologer about the fate of a particular project when the Moon is void, it's presumed you likewise lack connections. Without outer assistance, your project is likely to fail.

The logic behind this divination is more symbolic than literal. It does not presume that everyone travels the same celestial assembly line, passing through good and bad times all at once. Not all of the hundred thousand letters mailed during a void-of-course Moon will fly from the postman's hands and land in a trash dumpster. But if you begin a project on such a Moon and later find your work faltering, the symbolism of the void can be helpful.

Know that *you'll* have to supply the extra oomph to make things happen. I once left a resume at an employment office just minutes before the Moon went void of course. When days passed and they didn't call me for an interview, I called them. The woman on the other end of the phone was surprised. "I don't know why we didn't call you. You look like an excellent candidate. Let me set up an interview with you now." I eventually got the job, so the void didn't doom me.

It's best to rest on a void Moon. People often feel sleepy and disconnected during these hours. It's a wonderful time to simply drift if you can. Drifting opens up space—into which surprising and inspired ideas can suddenly enter. Void Moons are also good for doing activities that you don't want to hear further results from. It's said that if you mail your taxes at this time, you won't be audited. One of my clients scheduled a medical test for a void Moon, and the result was exactly what she was hoping for: negative. (She was especially relieved because a month earlier, the same test had a scary positive result.)

If you have no choice and you must schedule something important on a void Moon, know that you can still be successful, especially if you're willing to apply a little personal

chutzpah. Void Moons help to ripen individuality; they favor creative breakthroughs. This is an optimum time to cut loose from the prevailing wisdom and sneak past the cultural gates. Even a failed project can bring such brilliant learning, your future will shimmer because of it.

Being Moon paranoid is silly. Good or bad Moons are mostly what we make of them. A void-of-course Moon may not signal anything at all, particularly if you stand at no brinks, ready for no action. In that case, you've got a perfect astrological excuse to do nothing. If you want to drift and dream, go for it on the lunar void. Stepping out of the game can be wonderful from time to time. It's all up to you!

I keep Jim Maynard's Celestial Influences calendar on hand to know **when the Moon is void**. I also list them for you in my monthly Moon workshop:

<http://mooncircles.com/store/moon-workshop/>

Secret 7

Let your Moon practice be ordinary.



If you're like me, you're overly ambitious. And if you're not, you can skip this last secret. Read it only if you're plagued by a desire to be the best at whatever you do—which for Moon practice may mean you want to live life traveling on a moonbeam, connected to Luna by a fine intuitive thread, your pores permeated with the essence of each Moon phase and sign. But there it is. Again and again, you forget to notice her. You have no idea which sign the Moon is in today; it's been weeks since you checked. And the last two Full Moons you didn't have time for a ceremony. Or you did, but being honest, you hurried through the motions and nothing special happened.

And, if you're like me, you might also feel "less than" whenever you hear This One's potent story about drawing down the goddess or how That One gets special messages from Luna herself. Psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim once suggested that adults who believe too much in magic (including astrology!) were probably deprived of it prematurely in childhood. I once had a therapist who suggested those whose beliefs are too fervent often swell like puffins because underneath they're actually full of doubts and insecurity. I'm not saying this is true of all zealous Moon lovers. It's just that if you're tempted to get too crazy or dreamy about your Moon practice, it may be that it has nothing to do with the Moon at all.

The first and smartest thing I ever did was to make my Moon practice mundane. I simply took my monthly household chores and re-scheduled them to the rhythm of the Moon. For years now I've celebrated each New Moon by throwing out my old kitchen sponge and unwrapping a new one. When I lived in California, with an automatic sprinkler system and plants always lush and blooming, I would fertilize my orchids and roses every two weeks, at New and Full Moons. Later, when I moved to Oregon, and I had to water our few precious plants by hand, with water from a well that was quite weak, I used the Moon's cycle in a new way. Since plants absorb water more efficiently during water sign Moons, I would schedule my watering for the days when the Moon was in Cancer, Scorpio, or Pisces.

The algae cleaner for my pond is supposed to be added every three to four days, so I add it on the day the Moon changes sign (which is every three to four days). I look for air sign Moons to light my scented candles. I like to air out bedding on air sign Moons too. I schedule my haircuts and facials for Libra (the "beauty") Moon. And if I don't achieve perfection, it's only mundane stuff. I let myself off the hook. It's a Moon magic that's undemanding and ordinary, which over time, has become quite special to me.

May it be the same for you!

We hope you enjoyed this
MoonCircles eBook!



For more magical content,
visit us at
www.mooncircles.com