



THE MAGIC PATH

TAROT FOR SELF DISCOVERY
KAREN CARNABUCCI, LCSW, TEP



“Opportunities to find deeper powers within ourselves come when life seems most challenging.”

— Joseph Campbell



Dedication

Thanks to all of my teachers who helped me understand the depths of the Tarot:

Rusty Smith Carnarius
Mary Katherine Greer
Rachel Pollack

... as well as many clients, trainees, friends and others who have awarded their trust, interest and enthusiasm and have prodded and pushed me to explain and teach what I know. You too are my teachers!

The Tarot is a kind of higher education.

The Tarot is a great meditation tool.

The Tarot builds intuition.

The Tarot takes us on spiritual path.

The Tarot taps into our right brain.

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I wish that I could tell you when I first discovered the Tarot. I wish that I could tell you that the heavens opened, the angels sang and the message boomed out for me to hear: “Tarot!”

(Kind of like the Judgment card!)

But no, there wasn’t any big magical day. It just happened that somewhere along the way, maybe during my high school or college years, someone showed me a deck of Tarot cards.

I must have been intrigued and purchased a deck of cards for myself. As an aspiring artist and lover of myth and symbol, I liked looking at the images and reading the tiny book that came in the package. I must have read the booklet hundreds of times, sharing and talking and giggling with friends about questions about romances, boys and the meaning of life.

At some point, I started reading books and delved even more deeply into myth and legend. There was Carl Jung, the great Swiss psychoanalyst who wrote “Man and His Symbols” among other books. Joseph Campbell, the master translator of myths and legends of the past, was making these age-old stories accessible to our modern minds. Toss in a few books and more audiotapes by Marion Woodman, the amazing Jungian analyst and visionary from Canada, then shaman books like Michael Harner, who popularized the return to respect for the shaman traditions of the millennia.

Pretty soon I found an amazing middle-aged woman, actually right in my neighborhood. She looked unremarkable with a plumpish body and plain-cut strawberry blond hair -- except for the fact that she regularly wore a fresh rose on her lapel, which intrigued me. Her name was Rusty Smith Carnarius, and she was born in China, the daughter of a diplomat, and had incredible adventures in the inner and outer worlds through the years. She led a spiritual discussion group at a local tea shop, a sweet little place where people could chat with a hot cup of tea about life questions for hours.

Rusty was well known in on the East Coast, as a Tarot enthusiast, spiritual teacher and inspirational speaker. Her way of communicating was highly

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practical and yet magical. Finally, she was able to put into context all the mounds of information that had been piling up within me during my intense self-study phase. I eagerly signed up for an actual Tarot course with her and took copious notes on her every word of wisdom.

Everything became crystal clear.

What was clear was that I had a gift for the Tarot, in way that I did not “get” astrology or palm reading or tea leaves or other special things. But I got the Tarot!

I started looking at the tarot with new eyes, now reading more confidently with my own questions. I carried my cards everywhere, and would pull a card for myself, just because. As time passed, my friends started asking me to read their cards – and gratefully treating me to a nice lunch.

Oh, duh.

Pretty soon I realized that my Tarot readings, which I had considered a fun hobby, actually had real value. Rather than just passing time with a friend and entertaining each other with the images on the cards, my friends and acquaintances really wanted to know what the cards revealed for them. And I must have been interpreting them in useful and good ways – because the luncheries where they took more were pretty tasty.

Eventually I put together little side business which I called “Madame Tarot.” (I was very well known in my community as an editor with the morning newspaper and didn’t want to confuse anyone with this dual identity, so I didn’t use my own name.) I commissioned an artist friend to create a batik painting of The Magician, as a woman, and used the art to illustrate a simple black and white business postcard. Pretty soon, without a lot of trying, I developed clientele, including 1-1 readings and occasional parties and other events.

Eventually, when I changed my career to psychotherapy, I could come out to the public, using the Tarot along with my other non-traditional approaches for healing, expanding intuition and spiritual growth. I was invited to teach Tarot for the local university’s adult education program – which became one of the program’s most popular courses – until someone wrote a sarcastic letter to the editor of the local newspaper complaining that the university

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was teaching superstitious Satanism or something like that.

For the past several years, I've been teaching Tarot as part of my private practice and mentoring aspiring Tarot readers, as well as continuing to integrate its amazing healing powers of the Tarot and other oracle-type cards in the transformational work I do with clients locally and through the internet.

People want to get the Tarot confidence vibe.

What you should do first.

First, be confident that you have gotten good training in learning the basics of the Tarot.

Understand how to use it for yourself and how you can use it for others, including people who learn differently and understand things differently than you.

Take your “job” seriously.

For the most part – apart from some generally curious people -- most people who are coming to you for readings are looking for answers to distressing problems in their lives. They are struggling with relationships, money and important decisions. Many of them would not consider going to a licensed psychotherapist but will offer you questions of the sort that therapists hear all the time.

I'll never forget the day that I was helping out my friends Patti and Joe set up their yard sale. Patti jokingly (I think!) suggested that I sit at one of the tables for sale and offer a tarot reading or two – it might bring in a bit of extra business.

So I pulled out my Tarot deck (remember that I was carrying them everywhere I went!) and we quickly scribbled up a little sign. A couple of curious people stopped, asking a question about this or that. Then one man sat in front of me and looked at me straight in the eyes. Almost in a whisper, he spoke his question.

A serious question:

“Will I live to see my daughter grow up?”

The man, dressed in worn blue jeans and a plaid shirt, was a long-distance truck driver. He had been recently hospitalized for a sudden heart attack and was slowly

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recovering. Life was suddenly precious and he wanted to know if he would live long enough to see his four-year-old daughter graduate from high school, get married, have children of her own...

I took a big breath and explained to him that I was not doing fortune telling. Yet, it was apparent that he was serious, painfully serious, and in great emotional distress. He truly was in need of direction and help. I doubted that he was the kind of guy that would make an appointment with a psychotherapist, and I did not want to turn him away.

I delicately changed the question a bit, acknowledging how much he loved his daughter and how much he wanted to guide her into adulthood. And I decided to trust the Tarot to reveal the best possible information for him, hoping that I could convey a soul-satisfying response that would be genuinely meaningful for him.

“How about,” I asked, “if we can take a look at how you can best care of yourself so you can be there for your daughter?”

That seemed good enough for Mr. Truck Driver, and we continued, turning over the the cards and determining how he might reduce his fear and enjoy life with his young daughter.

To this day, I hope that what I told him offered solace and direction. Since that day, I’ve also heard many clients thank me for helping them find the Tarot - and in that, finding a resource for comfort, inquiry, trust and growth.

So, apart from knowledge about the Tarot, you will also want to develop people skills.

Not everyone will be clear about his or her question. They may be confused, scattered, unsure, needy. They may be insistent that you “tell” them the future, no matter how many times you remind them that they have choices in their future. Sometimes they are rude or cynical; at other times they may be appear disinterested or look scattered.

It’s a skill to meet each person where he or she is at - and

Finally, there is ethics.

Ethics mean that you operate on the very best professional level, that you accept each client seeker with attention and respect to their sacred search,

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their efforts to make their lives better in one way or another.

Now, for the actual reading.

For you:

Give yourself enough time to get ready for your session, preparing both practically and spiritually.

By now, you should have a grounding and centering ritual for yourself. This ritual, whatever it may be, helps you stay present for your yourself and your client.

Depending on the moment, you may have personal issues that are distracting to you. Identifying your own “stuff” and being able to bookmark it for another time, making a pledge to yourself that you WILL indeed address it.

Meditation, prayer and quiet time before you begin your reading-- indeed, before you see your client will be helpful.

You will want to feel purified and clear. Avoid eating heavy foods, drinking alcohol, using drugs. Drink water to detoxify your body and if you have lemon juice available, add it to the water for extra detox advantage.

If your session is personally face to face, have available:

- Water (for yourself and your client) or a warming cup of tea.
- Pen and notepaper
- A table and lighting where the cards can be easily seen and there is enough space to lay them out.
- Comfortable seating, so both of you can relax and won't be distracted.
- Tissues, in case your client becomes tearful.

If your client is allergic to dogs, cats, candles or incense, be sure to

If your session is via telephone or video teleconference, invite your client to have water and pen and note paper nearby. The pen and paper is helpful if he or she wishes to take notes.

Alternatively, you can:

- Record the session for your client for later listening.

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- Have client record his or her own session. Take a photo of the card or cards and email or message to client during or after reading.

If your client is a first-time client, get to know your client rather than making assumptions that the client knows about the Tarot.

First ask:

Has the person had a Tarot card reading before?

If yes, and the client reports a memory of a difficult situation or a non-empathetic reader, explain how you will read the cards. Stay calm, nurturing and friendly.

Stay neutral about rating any previous reader, whether you receive good or bad reports about that person. You may wish to say, “Every reader has a different style. I like to work with the cards in this way.” Then share a little bit about how you work with the cards.

If your client has had positive experiences with a reading in the past, then that’s all good.

If no, you may alter your usual explanation to provide more information about what the cards are, what you will do, how the person can best take in the information, etc.

The basics:

- Be interested in building connection with your client as an individual (people skills)
- Ensure well being, comfort, privacy, confidentiality.
- (People may want to bring a friend).
- OK to record the session.
- Promise nothing.
- Do not foretell the future.

Take a card out of the deck if you believe that it will have a frightening effect on your client.

[Nancy Thompson story]

How to handle a client when he or she does not want to hear what you have to say?

You can say:

“Sometimes we are able to find the message later.”

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Or:

“You may feel some of this information does not fit for you. That’s fine. Take what you feel is useful to you.”

(Don’t argue with the client, don’t insist you are right, don’t tell the client that he or she is not “getting” it or otherwise criticize, belittle or demean the client.)

Here’s another way of looking at it.

If the client finds another reader, counselor, etc., let the client know that you are glad that he or she found someone to connect with.

Be professional and do not criticize or put down other readers, psychics, etc. (Although you may find out if he or she is comfortable and trusts that person).

Keep learning. Refresh yourself and your skills.

Get consultation for yourself for difficult clients with a mentor or another who you trust.

Enroll in a basic psychology class or other kinds of non-Tarot learning to expand your knowledge and integrate it into your Tarot sessions.

"I'm not a teacher: only a fellow traveler of whom you asked the way. I pointed ahead – ahead of myself as well as you."

— George Bernard Shaw

Tarot, the magic journey

The Tarot cards are not fortune telling.

The Tarot is magical blend of history, spirituality, symbolism, life truths, artistic expression, esoteric wisdom and metaphysical lore. It is an art form. The deck and the cards that make the deck are magnificent tools for intuitive learning and personal growth.

With Tarot, we step away from the familiar path that we know and into a new landscape with curiosity.

If we have trust and joy, all the better.

The Tarot is hand friendly and fun.

The Tarot is a system of learning that has been put together in a visual way, a complete way. It is fun and appealing, yet also deep...

It is not divination, not fortune telling, but a tool to inspire our minds and accelerate our imagination.

Take a look.

Start with meditation.

Start with a notebook or journal.

Clear the mind.

Open, not negative, not wishful, not hopeful.

Question is important.

Focus.

If your question is too broad or too vague, you will get too much information or the information you will get will not make sense, like a watered-down cup of tea.

Look at the cards and say, "what else?"

“If you light a lamp for somebody, it will also brighten your path.”

— Buddhist saying

Your question is important.

Focus.

- Write your question in your notebook.
- Read it.
- Notice if it is too broad, contains more than one question or is otherwise unclear.
- Keep writing it again and again until you discover the essence of what you want to know.
- Talk with friends or people in your Tarot class or group about your question to get feedback. Let them help you clarify your question if needed.
- If you are lucky enough to belong to a Tarot group, ask your class companions for their thoughts, ideas and observations.

As we’ve noted, if your question is too broad or too vague, you will get too much information or the information you will get will be vague, weak or not make much sense, like a watered-down cup of tea.

Say, “what else?”

If you still don’t know what your question is, you can ask the Tarot to help clarify your best question.

“The future depends on what we do in the present.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

A few basic questions

There are lots of Tarot traditions and always lots of questions. Here are common questions from my students and my answers.

What kinds of cards do I pick?

Pick the card deck that speaks to your heart, soul and spirit. I like the Waite-Rider-Smith deck because I trained with it more than 30 years ago. I have several other decks, and I confess an affinity for beautifully designed cards with plentiful symbols that speak to my artistic sense. I like the ones with images including images on the pip (or Minor Arcana) cards.

Where do I put my cards?

There are lots of Tarot traditions, based on hundreds of centuries of Tarot lore. Some people like to keep their cards wrapped in pure silk cloth tied with a silk cord. Others have a special box or bag. Many place their deck, or decks, on an altar or sacred place when the cards not in use. What’s most important is that you treat your deck with honor, care and respect. Your deck is a tool for growth and self discovery and can really change your life. Respect it.

Should I use one of those books that come with the cards?

You’ll quickly realize that there are zillions of books and booklets with instructions for card-reading. (This is yet another!) Some focus on history, others on symbolism and yet others on art and design. Again, add to your library according to your interests. However, if you are using the tarot for personal development, put the book aside and practice

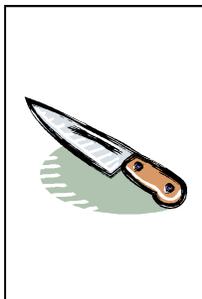
What do upside-down cards mean?

There are lots of interpretations about what reversed cards mean. Such as: they are negative, they represent the shadow side, the energy of the card is weaker, they suggest avoidance of the represented activity or danger, and on and on. In the beginning, read cards right side up.

“Use what seems like poison as medicine. Use your personal suffering as the path to compassion for all beings.”

— Pema Chödrön

OK, let's look at the cards.



Swords. Wands. Cups. Pentacles.

These four symbols are the ancestors of the suits of our modern playing cards. Swords become spades. Wands become clubs. Cups become hearts. Pentacles become diamonds. They refer to symbols in the Minor Arcana (minor secrets).

Swords

Swords are about air. They refer to things in the head — ideas, thoughts, belief systems, logic, planning, analysis and decisions. They, like wands, contain masculine energy.

Wands

Wands represent the energy of fire. They are held by the hands, so they refer to skills and talents, behaviors and actions. As another masculine symbol, they are active, thrusting, moving out into the world.

Cups

Cups contain, pour and flow with feelings, emotions and those most subtle of feelings — intuition. As a feminine symbol, they are vessels, holders of love and compassion.

Pentacles

Pentacles are of the earth. They represent practical and useful things — money, body, houses, earth, all valuable things. Think of Mother Earth and all that she provides.

Alternate symbols may include feathers or birds (swords); sticks and scepters (wands); vessels and bowls (cups) and coins and stones (pentacles).

Now for numbers.



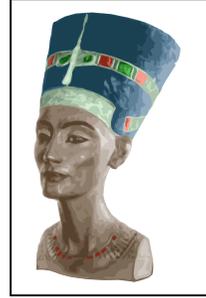
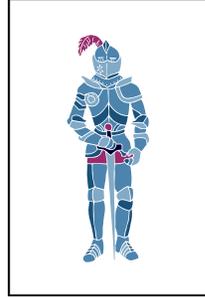
You'll find numbers in the Minor Arcana as well as the Major Arcana, which refers to the set of cards within the Tarot that refer to "major secrets." Numerology is a specialty in itself, but here are a few basics to know about numbers:

0	No-thing. Emptiness, open
1	New beginning
2	Duality. Relationship
3	Synthesis
4	Foundation. Stability. Organization.
5	Quest for stability
6	Healing and connection.
7	Initiation
8	Balance
9	Integration
10	End of a cycle

“What we have to learn to do,
we learn by doing.”

— Aristotle

The court or face cards



These court cards — also known as face cards — represent the inner journey that every human being makes. They are life stages. They help us identify where we are on our journey as well as where we wish to be. From a psychological viewpoint, they are stages of development as we progress forward in life.

Page

Pages are learners, just beginning a new venture. They stand with their feet on the ground. They are ready, curious, open and full of wonder.

Knight

Knights represent the move to maturity. They have integrated many life experiences and are well on their way in their journey of growth, change and discovery.

Queen

Queens represent competency. They are capable and handle themselves appropriately and well in both familiar and new situations.

King

Kings represent mastery. They have reached a high level of achievement — knowledge, skills, emotional balance and riches. They are comfortable in their ability to reign.