



THE RECAPITULATION EXERCISE





This is the starting point: the description of the exercise and how it works.

Recapitulation is an ancient technique for retrieving and healing your energy.

It also teaches you how to prevent current energetic loss. Those who pursue it the shamanic way, consider the recapitulation to be a never-ending process.

The technique has steps, phases and ramifications as the process unfolds for the individual practicing it. It is not a new technique and not one that we invented.

One form or another of the core idea of the recapitulation is present in all the shamanic traditions.

We have included here as much detail for understanding as possible for the western mindset, and tried to help it fit better with the enculturation that exists in these in modern times.

All shamanic traditions have some form of a death and rebirth process, each is centered on the simple concept that the way you are now will not work for someone who seeks to practice as a shaman in any of the traditions. So our view of the recapitulation came to be that it represents a 'little death' for those who pursued it to its logical conclusions, if logic even really applies. But it is orderly, linear in some respects, and productive - all things the western mind craves in the way it assembles a world-view.

Through recapitulation, we learned to understand detachment, personal responsibility and personal power. We discovered that there were two essential elements present in the process:

1. It could be used primarily for self-healing
2. It attunes one to the higher and finer vibrations

Psychologists will treat people who have

suffered traumatic experiences by urging them to work back through the experience and put it behind them. They have names for all these techniques and processes, they all sound quite scientific and well reasoned. In this process, we have observed that they ignore the basic issue of being human and so often the person takes years to work on one major trauma and is never really freed of the pain which accompanied it, nor the patterns they struggle with throughout life spring from it.

Shamans see the recapitulation as a more natural means of dealing with it; stalk the memory, and take back your energy, letting it become just a memory, with no life, no power to invoke a response from the present.

The theory of recapitulation is simple. Every interaction you have had with other people in your life has tied up personal energy. Each memory you have requires energy to keep it alive and maintain the emotions you have about the encounter. Over the course of a lifetime you invest enormous amounts of energy in these things and they drain you, make you miserable, and create behavior in the present predicated on the energies of the past. You will be surprised after doing even a partial recapitulation at how much energy it was taking on a daily basis to keep those things from the past alive in the present. Shamans know, or have seen, that we as human beings do not have an infinite amount of personal energy. We need every little scrap available to us in order to live life effectively or for shamans, to accomplish the tasks that they feel lay before them. Modern psychologists try to do much the same thing as the recapitulation for their patients.

On an energetic level, the changes in individuals are quite profound, even for those who practice it purely for reasons of self-healing.

The physical process is simple and is as follows:

1. You can make a list (of people, experiences, life events) and follow it, not a bad idea actually, or pick a time period of your life that you are going to recap.
2. The technique is very simple. Begin by arranging some time that you won't likely be disturbed.
3. You will need a space that compresses your energy, a closet would do, or even putting a heavy blanket over you will work as well.
4. Quiet your mind and relax, setting the intent to retrieve your energy trapped in your past.
5. Bring up a specific memory or event.
6. Get it pictured right in front of your face in as much detail as possible. (Colors, sounds, smells, people involved, etc.)
7. Turn your head to the left and exhale.
8. Then slowly turn your head from left to right drawing in the energy of the scene in front of you with your breath (inhale).
9. When your head is completely to the right again turn slowly back to the left exhaling the foreign energy (that which is not yours) that exists from the scene.
10. Keep sweeping the scene until you feel 'done' with it.
11. Go on to the next event on your list, or that comes to mind, and keep doing this until you have worked through each one.
12. Be aware of what you are doing and stay focused.

If you're just starting the recap, I would suggest fifteen to twenty minutes a day just to start out, give it two weeks, and then take stock of where you are.

When you are finished the first time you may feel a little lightheaded, that's normal, it means something is changing.

If the memories you are working with are especially painful or traumatic it may take a

number of recapitulations to completely suck the energy back out of them. You will know it is working when you recall one of the memories and find that the emotions it was evoking in you have lessened, or even completely disappeared.

Sometimes you may look at them and feel like they aren't even your memories, they seem as though they happened to someone else. This is a start; you may want eventually to do a complete recapitulation. Shamans are never done recapitulating; it is done over and over through a lifetime.

There are other techniques that can be added to this, but this is the core of recalling personal energy to yourself from the past. It may seem silly at first, but if you keep it up it will make a major change in you, give you more clarity and change the perspective from which you make decisions now in your life.

Now, you may ask, 'Why the recap and not (fill in practice of your choice)?' The reason the recap works when many other things only appear to work is twofold:

1. **It is a real** physical/energetic connection in your energy, it is a physical act through your energy and because of that it involves you completely in the process.
2. **The recapitulation** demands that you work at the process of first, self healing and then movement beyond healing into the shamanic. You can't just say you recap and expect everything to be 'all wonderful and stuff'. You can't just say, "I forgive X for dumping crap in my life," and expect it to work either; there must be a physical and energetic breaking of those connections. This is real, not illusory in terms of changes.

Let me add a couple of things here. The recap is real, but unlike other methods we have seen, even some claiming to be recapitulation, this process ends in nothing less than a transformation of the individual practicing it, don't take it lightly. If you like your life just the way it is, don't start the recap. One of the things

that bother us about other approaches is that they go nowhere, people use the techniques, but no change or progress is made. I think that is attributable to a single reason. No one ever talks about the patterns created through connections, or how the ghosts of those connections remain in your energy like the grooves on a record and they will try to re-exert themselves again if you don't erase them. As you recap you will find that to be the case over and over again - circumstances will seem to conspire to get you back into a pattern, which you have recently been recapping. The released Karma will always try to reinstate itself in your life, don't allow it. The difference comes in recognition and the ability to be detached from the pattern enough not to repeat it. But the ways in which this occurs, the re-exertion can at the least, be entertaining.

The word, 'recapitulation' was popularized in modern times in the books of Carlos Casteneda. Although he used this name, he was clear in his books that the recap has been a part of all shamanic practice for as far back as anyone could recall.

Some shamanic cultures refer to it as purification, throwing off the world, or being reborn into the world. It is often combined with other processes or techniques during shamanic initiations. Here in Western Culture, however, it has been separated out as a distinct technique of its own.

The reason for this is the enculturation process, which most of us go through in order to function as a part of our society.

For a person who has never recapitulated before, how would you recommend they start? Can you begin with any event, an intense event, a minor one?

I would stay away from really intense events to begin with, although some people are so driven by them they just plough right in and manage to live through the process. I would suggest starting with your day and your experiences with the people in it. This gives you a feel for the process and also allows you to gain a sense of how you expend your energy just in a normal

day going about your business with people.

If that seems unworkable, then make a list of people you can recall easily working backward through your life, and start with those interactions. The odd thing about the recap is you will find people and events coming to mind that you had totally forgotten about.

What you begin to see in all that, are patterns in which you have reacted to create situations in your life. Eventually you come to the point you even wonder if you've had a life, or whether you are simply a pale reflection of the wants and needs of others.

This will be a powerful part of the healing process, but not always a comfortable one. The recap will show you things about yourself; assumptions you have held as true which are not and some of those things can be very painful to look at. But usually, by that point, you won't quit anyway; it's rather like a good detective story you just can't put down. Who am I really? And more importantly, who will I become? The answers will be very interesting and unique to you.

Are you breaking the connections with the breathing or pulling your energy back and expelling extraneous energy or both?

Both actually, the pulling back re-ignites those strands of energy in you and the memory. The exhale, with the intent to break that connection and take back what is yours, pushes out the foreign energy and breaks the connection.

You will also find that people you recap intensely suddenly make unannounced appearances back in your life, like they wonder where the energy went and come to investigate. The recap is not a 'theory'; those that have worked with it extensively can tell you that the results are sometimes odd and amazing.

What if there is someone in the past that really needs recapping but you do not want to show back up?

They won't always show up physically, especially

if they don't know where to find you, but you may hear about them from odd sources. And beyond that, once the connection is broken there is no purchase for reconnecting, they usually just wander away. It can be really weird how that happens.

What if you recognize, but still repeat the pattern?

Then you obviously need to recap it more. There are parts of it not exposed yet to your energy. You may in fact, find yourself repeating a pattern, but if you recognize it, think of how different that already is from when you didn't even know it was a pattern, you just thought it was life.

So recognizing is a step. A huge step - before you just lived the pattern.

Regarding the enclosing structure, are there any preferred materials?

I'm not sure it makes any difference. Originally this was done in small caves for the compression and attachment to earth energy. Since westerners already tend to be detached from the earth, I've found it doesn't make any real difference; they just may be a little more strident in some of their emotional reactions. The energy released will tend to move back to its original source.

Do I have to get in a closet or use a blanket?

Well, it would be better to compress your energy in some way, sitting out in your parked car, in the bathroom, under a blanket if that's comfortable for you, the compression helps you to recall and creates a more complete sweep and breaking of the energy involved. It doesn't have to be a closet, but closets work really well.

Is any one time of day better than another, morning-afternoon-evening, for recapping?

I prefer early evening, about twilight, but any time seems to work, although I will say that at times in the process it seems that certain times of the day work better than others for getting at

events that occurred around that time. But in the beginning, when you have the time available is the time to do it.

What happens if you turn your head the opposite directions?

Nothing. This is an exercise in intent, the reason it is set up the way it is, is simply to expedite contact with the left side of your energetic self, the part not seen or reasoned with, but felt and emoted upon. It works better that way, but working the opposite direction is not a disaster, it's all in the intent you have when recapping. You might also find it a little more 'reasonable' in how you perceive the results too. But it's still the same. There are also alternative methods of recapping; they weren't all always this instructional. I wouldn't panic if someone did it the opposite direction; I just think it works better starting out to stick to the 'normal' method.

We sometimes have a hard time recapping specific issues; our minds seem to just recap what it wants.

Then the best thing to do with it is to pick out specific threads in it that are not the core issue and work those at first, essentially working the edges as you move in, usually you find the overwhelming feeling dissipates as you break it down into smaller parts. If your brain tries to wander, stop recapping. It will get the hint.

Are there ramifications to recapping close proximity to another person? I usually recap in bed, before going to sleep, and my partner is usually lying there next to me. Am I giving her nightmares?

Yes, it can happen. The energy released can actually cause that, it is not a connective issue, but can pass through a person, especially in dreaming. Recapping is best done awake, alone, or at least at some distance.

What if you want to get your energy back but not break the connection? Like with children?

The memory remains; in a sense of recall it is not broken, just no longer draining you. You create new connections based on a different insight into the relationship, especially with children. Children are an exception, as long as they are dependant on you emotionally. I suggest not recapping kids, or if you start recapping them stop at events that are approximately half their age. When they reach a place of maturity, which can vary with the individual, then you can recap the balance.

If you have a pattern that is not good that is draining energy from you and the kids you still don't recap?

You can recap the pattern definitely, just not all the things associated with your children. This will change your relationship with them, it can be difficult, but it always seems to work out for the better. The same can be said of other family members, things will change, because the patterns that created the relationship have changed.

What if there are other connections such as children you had with that person?

The children have the connections to them and those remain, but they aren't your connections.

I'm thinking of family abuse type situations. I understand. I've gone through that with a number of people who have done the recap. I can honestly report that none of them had any problems with those people. Nothing was there to reconnect with. And some of those situations had put people in hospitals, near death.

With the ongoing recap(?) of my life - should I recap the changes that ensue from what I have already recapped as well?

The first pass through your life usually takes about two years, but after the first six months I think it is a good idea to begin recapping daily interactions as well and that usually means you are covering the changes coming through the recapping you've already done. So it dovetails back in on itself in that process. So to answer your question, yes, start recapping what you

have already seen as change in recapping.

Is a flotation tank not a good idea to do recap in?

No, no water, seriously, it could be the bad twinkie. (Don't recap in water.)

The Recapitulation Exercise is based on the work of Carol Tessier.