



CREATING NEW RITUALS

TO MARK THE SPECIAL MOMENTS OF LIFE

Jeltje GORDON-LENNOX, *trainer*

NEW SERIES OF TRAININGS

- **Module 1:** Workshop accessible to all interested parties
- **Modules 1+2:** Professional ritual accompaniment
- **Module 3:** Advanced Theoretical and Clinical Practice (CAS)



A BIT OF BACKGROUND

Growing need to mark life events with bespoke ceremonies

Some twenty years ago, Thomas Wegmüller and Klaus Beeler founded the Fachschule für Rituale. Together with Susanna Meier and Susanna Maeder, they pioneered training in ritual accompaniment in the German-speaking regions of Europe. At the same time, unaware of the work of her Swiss-German colleagues, Jeltje Gordon-Lennox set up the Ashoka Association and began offering non-religious ceremonies in the French-speaking parts of Europe, notably in Switzerland and France.

Between 2000 and 2012, the Fachschule für Rituale organised five three-year training courses and trained around 50 people. In October 2015, Susanna Maeder re-launched the Fachschule für Rituale with a new concept and an updated formula that focuses on counselling in ritual and accompanying people throughout their lives.

During this same time period, Jeltje trained some 30 celebrants using a different programme. She too set up an association for ritual professionals, similar to that of the Fachschule für Rituale group, and called it *celebrants.pro*, now known as *celebrants.ch*.



Birth of the European Ritual Network (ERN)

In the autumn of 2015, Jeltje and Thomas were invited, together with trainers from six different European countries, by the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht (NL) to a consultation of ritual experts. Despite the linguistic, cultural and historical differences of the organisations they represent, the experts soon recognised their common goal: train competent professionals for ritual accompaniment. Moreover, they found the exchanges personally enriching and stimulating for their respective organisations.

Their collaboration was strengthened during a conference organised by Jeltje and Thomas in November 2016 in Geneva. The group established the European Ritual Network (ERN) and launched a book inspired by their first meeting in Utrecht, ***Crafting Secular Ritual: A Practical Guide***.

Subsequently, the training programmes offered in Switzerland are harmonised to take into account both Susana's trainings with German speakers and the requirements of the Certificate of Advanced Studies in Ritual Accompaniment (CAS).

In the summer of 2019, Jeltje inaugurated her new training programme as an independent trainer for a group in the Cévennes (FR). The participants and the trainer alike were pleased to discover that, just like tailor-made ceremonies, the new modules can be adapted to almost any group's needs, themes and settings.

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OUR APPROACH

Human beings mark important events with rituals

Just like our distant ancestors, we need rituals to mark the special moments of life and to support us in an increasingly unpredictable world.

As our societies became more urbanized, responsibility for creating rituals shifted from small groups to institutions. When institutional rituals are seen to be of little or no relevance, people often look elsewhere for meaningful words and gestures. One of the current trends is to look to other cultures and times. Nevertheless, people who want a shopping cart filled with ready-to-use rituals risk disappointment. Copy-pasting other people's rituals is rarely satisfactory; the elements of these ready-made rituals do correspond to our reality.

In a society characterized by consumerism, where over-consumption of disposable items is the norm, partnerships and even friendships are notoriously short-lived. People aspire to rituals with which they can identify and which encourage long-term relationships. Commitment is equally important when welcoming a newcomer and taking leave of a deceased loved one.



Exercising our right to create rituals

Our first challenge today is to reclaim our right to create rituals. The second is to relearn the art of ritual creation so that how we honour our special moments meets our needs and reflects our values.

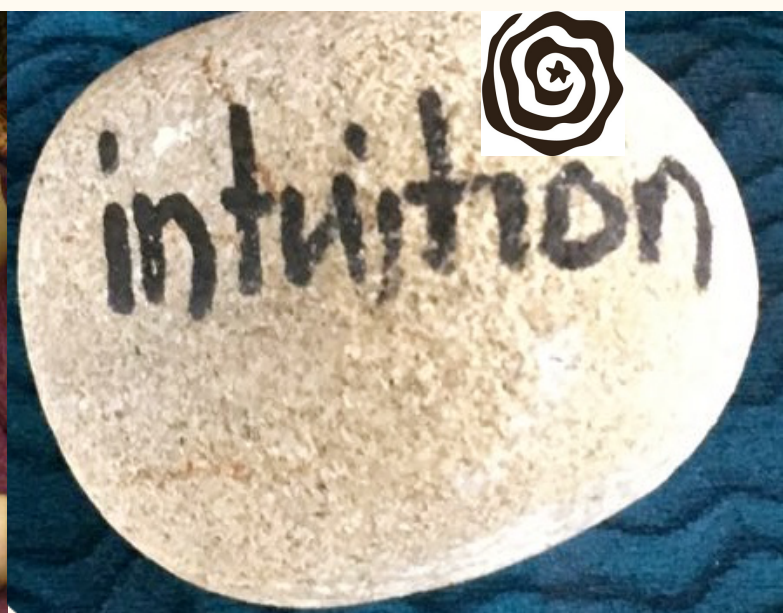
'Ritual is work, endless work. But it is one of the most important things that we humans do. §

The key elements of rituals with transformative power are:

- intentionality
- discipline
- mindful awareness
- taking into account physical and emotional reactions
- conscious interaction with others and objects
- attention to pleasure, humour and wisdom.

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§ Seligman, Weller, Puett et al. (2008) *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. New York: Oxford Press. p.182.



METHODOLOGY

Making time for creating new rituals

Training and workshops in ritual accompaniment are based on theoretical learning and practical experience. The planning, creation and realisation of new rituals requires a significant investment of energy and time, both in the classroom and at home.

E-learning is now widespread and, while it is effective for the study of factual knowledge, no virtual platform can replace proximity and direct contact. Participants who aspire to professional ritual accompaniment require personal attention from an experienced instructor and learning conditions that are similar to what they will encounter in their work. They must be able to handle complex situations that affect the lives of their clients.

This methodology fosters creativity and non-competitive peer support. Interaction among participants, group work, imagining and simulating rituals and feedback from others are essential for learning how to use the tools proposed and to creating rituals.Δ

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Δ These tools have been forged, tested and tempered with clients and professional celebrants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.



WORKSHOPS

Learning the craft of ritualmaking

Ritualisation is an ancient human response to change, loss and death. It engages us in an imaginative and creative process. We practice ritual for many reasons, not the least of which is to feel safe. When our rituals make sense to us and our loved ones, they provide a safe context for our feelings and act as a catalyst for empowerment. Being aware of this process and using it to improve our lives can make us better, stronger and freer human beings.

The workshops are designed to instruct and provide participants with practical tools and experience in creating custom rituals. They can be adapted to nearly any group's needs, themes and settings.

Objectives:

- Examine the broad spectrum of human ritual activity and how appropriate ritual practice meets our most basic human needs: physical, neurological, social and spiritual.
- Learn to use the work of Stephen W. Porges on polyvagal theory (PT) to promote healing of trauma and restoring broken relationships (*exercises and tools*).
- Master the craft of ritual to reclaim our life events, write our own history and civilise our world (*exercises and tools*).

At least 6 people are needed to open a workshop.

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TRAININGS

Professionals in ritual accompaniment

Module 1 focuses on the basics of creating secular rituals and making ceremonies or ceremonial moments to mark life transitions for oneself and one's loved ones. A certificate of 'Specialist in Emerging Ritual' is awarded to participants who have completed the requirements of the first module.

Module 2 addresses the needs of professionals - such as celebrants - who accompany their clients in the creation of rituals. Participants who complete the requirements of the second module receive the certificate for 'Professionals in Ritual Accompaniment'.

Those who meet the requirements for Module 3 receive the 'Certificate of Advanced Studies in Ritual Accompaniment (CAS)'. The third module involves writing a thesis and defending it before a panel of ritual experts. The successful candidate is ritually awarded the Certificate of Advanced Studies in Ritual Accompaniment (CAS) in a public ceremony.

Professional training Modules 1 & 2 require 6 to 12 participants.

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TERMINOLOGY

Professional training

CAS

The term CAS is not a federally recognized title but simply refers to the structure and requirements of a 10 point ECTS Continuing Professional Development (CPD), i.e. approximately 300 hours (of classroom study, personal work, supervision, visits, diploma thesis). The CAS diploma constitutes a Swiss and international equivalence in education.

Individual and Group Supervision

Supervision is a guided learning method. It is designed to improve participants' skills in creating rituals on a personal and professional level. It addresses the challenges posed by ritualisation such as expectations, tools and techniques, as well as managing the audience and emotions.

Individual Supervision: 50 minutes

Tariff:* CHF 140.-

Group Supervision: 2-3 hours depending on the number of participants

Tariff:* CHF 120.- / person for two; CHF 100.- / person as from three participants

** The supervisor is paid directly by the participant, who is responsible for having each of his or her sessions validated. Supervision fees are not included in the costs of the modules.*

Intervision

Intervision refers to a method of peer-to-peer learning that takes place within a group of equals, without outside guidance. It is not compulsory but is strongly encouraged, especially for Modules 2 (PRO) and 3 (CAS).

Duration of the intervicion: 2 hours with 2 persons; 3 hours for 3 persons or more.

Cost: Participants are responsible for their own travel expenses.

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JELTJE GORDON-LENNOX

Trainer and workshop leader

Jeltje Gordon-Lennox (MDiv), is a Swiss accredited psychotherapist, author and trainer. She writes in English and French on contemporary ritual practice and the role of ritual as a resource for healing and restoring broken bonds. As a psychotherapist, she has expertise in the fields of psychotraumatology. Jeltje lives in Switzerland with her jazz musician husband and their two children. She enjoys music, theatre, modern art, reading fiction, hiking and k-dramas.

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