

Young Pagan Altar Class

7 weekly classes

30-45 minutes each

Note to Parent: This class is designed for any Pagan; no path-specific information will be included. Having a Pagan class will lay a great foundation for any path that is followed, later. If you desire more of a path-specific class, simply add in what you feel necessary, when you come to it. Another alternative would be to have a simple class after the completion of this one, on just one path.

Day 1 – Altar

Introduction Information: Altars have been around for a really long time; in fact, since Neanderthals' time. Almost all religions have used altars, in the past, and many still use them today. Altars are usually personal to the one who made it and you are to respect that. Only touch altars, after receiving permission.

Altars are used for many different purposes: meditation; connect with spirits or Gods and Goddesses; in memory or celebration of others, or Gods and Goddesses; for doing a ritual; for devotions; healing, protection, and many other things. It is important to understand the purpose of altars when you make or see them.

Parent: Tour: Take your child on a tour through one of your altars. Do not go into too much detail about it except to tell them the names of the things on it, as well as its purpose.

Activity: Make a list of “reasons to have an altar” on different slips of paper, one per slip. Fold them up and put into a hat or bowl. Take turns drawing slips of paper, reading the purpose and naming at least 5 things that could be found on that type of altar. If you have completed but you feel that it is something that needs to be gone over again simply play again, with your child.

Day 2 – Types of Altars

Information: There are four major types of altars: natural, complete room, small/portable, and semi-portable. It is important to know all these kinds of altars so, we will go over them.

- Natural – an altar that is made outside in a garden or large area. When making these altars, it is very important to understand what you are putting into it because of weather and seasonal changes that might wipe them out or cause changes.
- Complete Room Altars – these altars are simply a complete room that is dedicated to the purpose of the altar. Sometimes people start these and spend their entire lives adding to it.
- Small/portable altars – are altars that are set-up anywhere. These type of altars are easy to put together and quick to tear down. Sometimes this kind of altar is set-up for awhile and then torn down and moved to a different area, where it will suit its new purpose better.

- Semi-Portable altars – these type of altars are made from items already present, such as a shelf that holds your trophies this week and next week is an altar set-up in dedication of a new brother or sister. These altars can be used for any reason, even different altar set-ups.

Activity – look around the house, as it is now and see how many places you can find to set-up an altar without changing things too much.

Day 3 – Field Trip

Take the time to have a field trip to a local or online (if there is no local, only) New Age store. Find interesting things and discover their purpose for an altar item. Be sure to learn as much as possible from your parent or guide.

Parent: You will act as a guide during the field trip so be ready for questions. Follow your child around and allow them to look at whatever they want to. If they find things that catch their eye let them know what it is and give them some examples as to what kind and why it would be used on an altar. Have fun but be careful not to turn it into your own “this is what” show, the more they feel they have found something the more they will remember what it is as well as its uses. Offer them as many uses for things as you can think of and always tell them that it could be used for more so if they find a purpose you didn’t cover later they will not feel they have been lied to. If you are not sure about an item don’t feel like a stranger to staff there; they should know all of what they carry and at least one use of it. If doing this online, allow them to control the mouse and be sure to tell them that whatever is written about the object is not necessarily the only reason for its use.

Day 4 – Associations

Information: It is important to understand that everything you put on an altar has meaning. It can be as simple as the color of things. When planning out your own altar be sure to understand everything you choose to put on it. If there are any questions just ask any Pagan adult about it, but remember, eventually you will have to know the meanings of things as they pertain to you personally.

Activity – if you have a correspondence journal started, be sure that it contains colors and shapes. If you do not have one, start one now and add colors and shapes. To do this you will add the color as the heading of your page then ask an adult what that color means to them and write two or three words they tell you. Next take a crayon or marker of that color and draw on a page with it (shapes, squiggly lines, or scribble). Take note of how it makes you feel and write down one word on this paper to add to the words the adult told you. Take the time for a day or so to connect with that color and pay attention to when you see it and how it makes you feel. Once done add those words to the page as well. These meanings for each color will be not only what it means but what it means to you. Repeat for other colors and shapes....you can add anything you want to this journal as it will carry with you through life but for now just colors and shapes are a must to make an altar.

Day 5 – Altar Specifics

Information: Although there is nothing in stone as to what an altar has to have on it, altars have a specific way to set them up and what they must contain. Let's look at this a little more in detail below.

To set-up an altar there is not much that is in stone because it needs to fulfill its purpose and work for the one setting up the altar. There are a few things that seem to shine in all altars and those need to have a closer look. The focal point of the altar is usually either the center or the middle of the back of an altar. A focal point will hold the largest and/or most dear item to the altar itself. Some people have a special number that they feel lucky or important and they draw imaginary lines to represent that. Although you might want to include a focal point in your altar, the division lines might be something to deal with later.

To set-up your altar there are steps that most go through. Below are the steps and what you need to do for each of them.

- Prepare – determine what you are going to put on it and making sure you have everything. Be sure to check the size of the altar versus what you plan to put on it so that it will fit.
- Purification – purify yourself as you make it, as well as each item that is put on it. To purify yourself you can rinse hands in scented water or have an adult use a smudge stick. Each item that goes on the altar will need to be wiped down with scented water, blown pure with the wind from outside (be sure the item doesn't blow away), washed with rainwater, or any other form of purification you want to use. It is better if you and the items used are purified differently. It can even be as simple as different types of the same kind, such as different kinds of smudges, etc.
- Invocation – this is a little written or memorized saying to welcome the 'birth' of the altar. You can write it any way you feel like writing and it can be a lot of words or just a few. Be sure to make it fit the reason you are having the altar.

Activity – prepare everything for making your own altar. Be sure to include all items you wish to use as well as your invocation. If you don't have all the items you want simply "make do" by being creative with the things you do have (a Aunt J'Mima syrup bottle can be draped with cloth to make a statue. To make it a God/Goddess simply add a name tag or items that are associated with it using tape and paper.), I am sure you can come up with tons of ideas. Be sure to include colors and shapes and other things that fit your purpose. Remember that everything you choose should have a meaning to it and that meaning should fit the purpose of the altar in some way. Do not put the altar together, just prepare for it!

Parent: You may want to guide your child a little bit with this class's activity. They may have lots of questions which will require as simple answers as possible from you. Remember that it is their altar and you may not agree with everything they want to put on it; however, it is your job to support, not determine. As your child gets older they will learn more appropriate things to do with altars just as I am sure you did.

Day 6 – Altar Set-up

Activity – Set-up your altar using all the steps that you have been taught to do. It is not important that you have someone watch you, but if you feel more comfortable feel free to have an audience. Below are some tips:

- Don't feel that you have to set it up the exact way you want it the first time. Moving things around does not matter and you don't have to purify things more than once no matter how many times you move them around.
- Your altar will be finished when it feels right to you. It doesn't have to look a certain way; it just has to suit you and the purpose that you are using it for.

Information: Once you have set-up your altar it is important that you preserve it. You will need to keep your altar fresh by tending to its energy. To do this: meditate, do devotions, rearrange the items on it, or make use of your altar on a daily basis.

Parent: If your child wants you to watch as he/she sits up their altar, simply do that. Be careful not to ask questions as to what he/she is putting on it; that is for the test next week. Answer questions they have with as simple answers as possible.

Day 7 – Verbal Test

Information: This week you will be giving your adult a tour of your altar. Be sure to answer all the questions you can for him/ her/them as I am sure there will be many. If you get stuck on something feel free to ask questions yourself; you will not understand everything and the only way to learn will be with questions. Parent: This week your child will be giving you a tour of his/her altar. Be sure to let them do all their talking before you begin questions.

You should ask questions as needed to find out why each item is on the altar, if your child is older why each item is located where it is also. Be sure to give constructive criticism using soft words. If changes HAVE to take place be sure to suggest instead of order. It is more important right now that the altar contains things that contribute to its purpose and the correct procedure was used in making it. Be sure to ask the steps to setting up an altar and how to maintain upkeep as part of your questions if you weren't told during the tour. If you are using this as a class, the activity in this class would determine the grade.