

# Making and Using Medicine Bundles and Bags

By Lucinda Hodges

*Symbols of connections,  
With allies of the earth.  
Medicine to heal us  
And give us rebirth.*

*Talents to honor,  
Abilities to praise,  
Strength and compassion  
Guide our Medicine ways.  
By Jamie Sams*

**Tribal Bundles, called the Grandmothers, were the oldest and most sacred. Today these Grandmother bundles have been secreted away, many are protected by Grandmother Elders as well as by some Medicine Men.**

Jamie Sams

For generations Native American Indians have used traditional medicine bundles and bags. Each bundle and bag was assembled and passed on according to the reason for its creation. Some were handed down from warrior to warrior, others from shaman to shaman. These medicine bundles and medicine bags became living histories of Native American people, their clans and their experiences across generations.

Adapting this Native American tradition to contemporary life can be a meaningful way to strengthen our own inner intuition and build strong bonds with extended family. A way of retaining memories for ourselves and lending positive influence to the lives of those we care

about and want to connect with. And of course, a source of strength for our own personal healing.

## **Making your own personal medicine bag**

A personal medicine bag is for you alone and should not be shared as a whole with others. The idea is to place items in a small pouch or bag over time that have meaning to you: a shell you were attracted to on a sunset stroll on the beach; a seed pod from your favorite shade tree; a button from a prized dress. Items may be individually wrapped in cloth or leather to protect and preserve them. The bag does not need to be a traditional leather bag and should be kept in a place that is all your own. A small pouch can be worn or carried with a chosen item from your personal medicine bag. Over time you will develop a sense of when and why an item belongs in your personal medicine bag.

**Personal Medicine bundles can be carried or worn on the person. These Bundles are called on when needed for strength and/or courage during daily activities.**

Jamie Sams

## **Making Medicine Bundles**

Medicine bundles can be personal for your own use, or made for a particular purpose and passed on. Again, the bundle does not to be made of leather and traditional materials. Any valued piece of cloth folded together and tied with a ribbon will do. Reusing the lining from a worn winter coat or sewing pieces of favorite material together for a bundle are good choices. The idea is to use what is already around you and not buy new items. I like to use river willow branches and fold cloth over the branches, tied with bits of ribbon or strips of leather, to give the bundle shape. Willows are plentiful where I live and I pass by them on every walk I take along the river banks. Use what you see and may be taking for granted in your everyday world. Use the time you spend making a bundle to reconnect with the natural world surrounding you.

## **Rites of Passage**

Medicine bundles and bags are most appropriately given and utilized during times of change: a child leaving home for the first time; a

soldier departing for war; a friend or sisters first pregnancy.

**Many of us have lost the support of our own families and friends. Other's have lost possessions and their own sacred space escaping toxic homes and fleeing environmental catastrophes. We understand acutely how fragile life can be. Use the power of making medicine bundles and bags wisely and you will be able to strengthen your own personal healing and create new allies.**

When you make a bundle for another person think of the purpose of the bundle and what message you want to give them with the bundle. For a soldier going to war items that evoke protection and strength would be chosen. To make a medicine bundle for healing, choose items that are medicinal, valued, and which hold deep spiritual meaning would be called for. If you are making a bundle to pass down to your child, or children, you want the items you give to have meaning to your family. Removing an item from your own personal medicine bag and placing it in the bundle would be appropriate for a medicine bundle for a son or daughter. Writing a poem, enclosing a personal letter, including an old family

photograph or a container of seeds from your favorite perennials in your garden, are all good ways to give of yourself and share something tangible of who you are with your family.

## **Sacred Space and Respect**

Be sure to honor yourself by only making and giving a medicine bundle or bag to a person who appreciates and respects you. Someone who will honor and understand the unique spirit and nature of the gift. This is particularly important for those of us coping with our own injuries and illnesses. Many of us have lost the support of our own families and friends. Other's have lost possessions and their own sacred space escaping toxic homes and fleeing environmental

**Nature teaches us how to know ourselves in the purest way possible. Each aspect of our world has its own space in which to create. If that space is respected by others, growth continues in harmony.**

Jamie Sams

catastrophes. We understand acutely how fragile life can be. Use the power of making medicine bundles and bags wisely and you will be able to strengthen your own personal healing and create new allies. To give some part of yourself is the most precious thing we have to

offer. In today's consumer driven world these are the most prized possessions we have, our sacred space, memories and experiences. The very essence of who and what we are and hope to become may be contained in medicine bundles and bags.