

SPARK 106

(Matrix Code: **SPARK106.00** for StartOver.xyz game.)

DISTINCTION: Your culture changes in the moment you implement new ritual.

NOTES: Ritual is the agreed upon way that we singularly or together acknowledge that something is happening. Washing hands is the ritual to acknowledge we are about to eat or do surgery. A birthday party is the ritual to acknowledge that someone has lived another year. Getting dressed up nicely is the ritual for going out. Shaking hands or hugging is the ritual for meeting someone, waving for saying goodbye. The culture typically defines its rituals. That relationship is reversible. Through executing new ritual you redefine the culture.

EXPERIMENTS:

SPARK106.01 The experiment is to implement new ritual. You could start with invisibly private rituals, such as always taking off your right shoe first to acknowledge that you are entering the sanctuary of your home and leaving your Gremlin at the door. I propose that you also experiment with a more visible and public change-accepting ritual called *Requiem*.

Most of us would admit to having painfully-unfinished messes in our lives. Our surface mask conceals undigested heartache that if revealed in the company of friends and relatives would have a chance to heal. Did you ever have a friend who went off and died secretly of some disease without saying goodbye? Did you ever end a relationship where you or others still carry unexpressed feelings or resentments? Even joyous reactions may fester if unshared.

The purpose of Requiem is to more consciously complete life changes such as adopting a child, divorcing, dying, becoming adult, shifting career, moving away, retiring, war, natural disaster, climate change, and so on. We live life undigested because we are trained to distract ourselves rather than purify ourselves. Imagine a meeting where people could come together and authentically complete emotional and psychological exchanges about what is happening. Our rage, joy, sadness and fear could be shared, our opinions and confusions heard, our needs and considerations spoken. Requiem is a time to complete profound communications.

The term *Requiem* comes from the Latin, *requies*, meaning “to rest.” Requiem is a safe space for people to say the rest, feel the rest, express the rest, understand the rest, and finally come to rest in the new conditions.

For example, we have no completion ritual for ending long-term relationship. When I got divorced I did what I had to do to split up, but the process lacked elegance, dignity, and also completion. Even after years some people are still offended, still holding unfinished communications in their hearts, because children, parents, friends and relatives never all came together in a way that such an important transition deserves. Sixty or seventy people came to our wedding. None came to our divorce. We had no Requiem.

Or consider modern culture's relationship to death. We regard death as a design error from God that science is quickly repairing. When someone dies, the biggest emotion at many modern funerals is embarrassment about having to admit that the mistake happened again. The modern consequence of death is not getting emails from someone for a very long time.

Friends usually depart by saying "good bye." Let us use Requiem to consciously say "goodbye" to each other before we die. Sure, there are reasons for not coming together. These days our friends and family may be spread all over the world. Plane tickets cost money. Vacation time may be scarce. Expressing intimate feelings is not easy. But if someone dies, many people would come to pay their respects at a funeral. Why not come together before we are dead? Then we can pay loving respects to each other and enter the new circumstances with dignity.

The choice to have a Requiem for accepting new circumstances is not something that can be decided by someone else. For example, it would be inappropriate to tell a person that it is Requiem time because they are soon dead when they are not willing to acknowledge their own condition. Great sensitivity and respect are in order. To prepare yourself for the new experiment all you need do is agree with your friends and family to use the following words: "I want a Requiem." Leave the rest up to your friends. We know what to do.

Here are a few guidelines for Requiem:

- ◆ When you or someone you know experiences a meaningful change that needs to be digested, set a date and send out invitations to Requiem.
- ◆ Find a Requiem host – a person who is trained to hold space for the Requiem process. Reserve a room for one to three days and nights, depending on how many people will attend and the severity of the change. The room should be carpeted and supplied with chairs, plenty of cushions and blankets, fresh drinking water, and healthy snack foods.
- ◆ The Requiem host is the first person to arrive and the last person to leave. He or she stays in the room all day (and all night, if needed) from start to finish, and has the ability to host meaningful conversations. As soon as two or more people have arrived the Requiem host says, "Let the Requiem begin."
- ◆ Requiem is a community of people gathered together in the name of Love. There are two rules to which participants must agree: 1) No alcohol or drugs. 2) Don't hurt (or threaten to hurt) yourself or anybody else. Then anything goes. People sit, stand, move, discuss, shout, blame, hate, scream, cry, defend, argue, mourn, dance, laugh, eat, sleep, ask daring questions, tell true stories, sing – they go and go, everyone together, until all is said and done.
- ◆ Whoever comes are the right people. Whenever they arrive is the right time. When people are hungry they bring out their food and share it. When people are tired they sleep. And, when it is over, it is over. This may seem like absolute chaos according to ordinary standards, but if the Requiem process is trusted it runs according to its own magnificent order.
- ◆ As the past is emptied, as the present fully arrives, when people are ready to create a new future together and the last people are about to leave, the Requiem host says, "This Requiem is ended." Then he or she closes the space.

Requiem is a facilitated process, meaning that it is started, navigated, and completed by a Requiem host, specially trained to hold space in total chaos for as long as it takes, and then bring things back to order in the new formation. If you are attracted to such a calling you already have the prerequisites.

Requiem host training provides you with skills and distinctions not available in ordinary Western culture – or we would already have Requiem. To prepare yourself there are a couple of experiments to do in the meantime.

SPARK106.02 Complete your own communications. This is an experiment in radical vulnerability, in letting your guard down. During this experiment you may look bad according to the standards of modern social acceptability. But this is an experiment from a different culture, a culture that includes Requiem. In the new culture you look just fine – this is how you look during Requiem. The experiment is this: during the next few days internally review your life and scan for incomplete communications. You can find them because they are the more radioactive memories. As the incidents come back to you, make a list of them in your *Beep Book* on a page titled *My Incomplete Communications*. After a few days, choose one of your incomplete communications and decide to complete it. This will take a lot of courage. Doing it on your own like this is the long, hard way compared to the safe environment of Requiem. Be gentle with yourself and with the other person. This is practice. Contact the person and ask if they are willing to complete a communication with you. If they say yes, then choose a safe place to meet, perhaps out in the open in a park, or in some café where you can have privacy. Your communication needs to be about you, how it was for you, your fears, your remorse. Let your broken heart speak. Then stop speaking and listen to what the other person has to say. Do not look for resolution, only for sharing your own experience and hearing their needs. Complete each communication through you repeating back what you heard the other person say, until they say, “Yes. You got it.” Then the communication is complete.

SPARK106.03 One of the basic hosting skills for Requiem is the ability to hold and navigate the space for strong feelings that may arise. The host assures the safety and complete-ness of vulnerable communications. Participants can only go as far as the Requiem host can go, so your experiment is to learn to go all the way now! This may take some time and effort. Consciously feeling is not part of ordinary Western culture. To bring those skills into the culture you can go learn them yourself. You gain the ability to feel by attending trainings that do not originate in Western pedagogy. A number of excellent programs exist. The ones I recommend use the clarity, processes, tools and techniques of Possibility Management. They are called *Expand The Box* and *Possibility Labs*. As an experiment, get yourself into this multi-year program and complete it.

There is one catch to having a Requiem. What if you are wrong? What if you have a Requiem for a divorce and then you get back together? What if you have a Requiem because you are dying and then you don't die? Wouldn't that be the ultimate embarrassment? Everyone comes around to make their final farewells, and then you don't have the good manners to go through with it! I suppose this would be the occasion for starting another new ritual. Everyone would come back together again, only this time we would call it *Resurrection*.