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Blessingways for All Women **By Anna Stewart**

811 words

As I go around speaking about my book *Mother Blessings: Honoring Women Becoming Mothers* and teaching women how to do blessingways, there are often women in the audience who feel left out. These are women who never had children, or women whose children are all grown, or women who had private, closed adoptions. They ask the same question, "What about me?" They all yearn for their own blessingway.

My response is always the same, "it's never too late to be honored!" Women can have a blessingway whenever we need or want one. But most of us won't do that so we should plan for women blessings to honor major life transitions such as significant birthdays, divorce parties, alternatives to bridal showers, death of a loved one, celebrating a new home, or marking when children leave home. These are all life events worthy of an intentional ceremony.

Let me use my own 40th birthday for an example. Like many women, I was reluctant to throw my own party. It felt 'selfish' to consider my own birthday worthy of a blessing. Sound familiar? I was used to showering the attention on others. Yet, I needed my community to support me as I ventured into the second half of my life. There was nothing specifically wrong in my life. My desire to be witnessed did not arise from unhappiness or a problem. My desire to be witnessed was just that- I wanted to be seen and heard, loved and understood for who I was at that point in my life. I also wanted to feel deeply supported as I ventured into the second half of my life.

I think the act of saying yes to myself was the biggest benefit to the whole ceremony.

I sent out the invitations and asked each woman to bring something to put into or on my metaphoric and literal basket. I wanted a container for all I would do and be in this next chapter. I bought a lovely wrought-iron basket with an open weave. It was important to me that the basket be very strong and durable. I put it in the center of my birthday blessing circle.

On my actual birthday, on a sunny January day, fifteen close friends arrived at my house. My husband took the kids out. I celebrated with them later in the day.

One friend opened the circle with a statement of intention, another women led us in a lovely warm-up dance and another friend led us in a song. Then each woman took a turn to share her offering and place it in my basket. Here was the heart of the circle. I share with you some of the gifts so you can see the range of possibilities.

Andrea put in a handful of pennies representing abundance
Maureen placed in white beeswax candles she made with her teenage son to bless my own joyful, creative relationships with my two sons.

Sarah laid soft green wool on the bottom of the basket to remind me to be gentle with myself.

Shelly wove a red power ribbon with the words Ask- See- Listen-Forgive-Open-Expected through the open weave.

Danae tied on a white leather cord with gold bells that came from her own medicine shield. She said the bells represented bringing the dance of youth into the wise crone years.

Tara scattered dried red roses for the passion, love, and beauty they symbolize.

Lisa added a small pouch of worry dolls to hold my fears.

Julie sewed a long arm with a hand at each end so that I would know I would also be dearly held. She also wrote this on a card;

“As you enter your forties:

May you continue to deeply embody your beautiful essence,

Shed what’s no longer necessary,

Deepen into the story that is yours,

Be held by sweet love,

And graced by robust health.”

As you can imagine, the basket holds a sacred spot in my home. This blessed container radiates love, support, and profound blessings for me. It was a gift to receive. After we filled my basket, we feasted and shared- all the elements of a blessingway lovingly presented.

I hope you feel inspired to create your own blessingway. The first and most important piece is to have a clear intention. Carefully consider what you need from your community as you prepare for a rite-of-passage.

Along with a statement of intention, you’ll need to do one thing in each of these categories to create a beautiful Woman Blessing:

- ✓ Welcoming
- ✓ Opening the ceremony
- ✓ Nurturing the woman
- ✓ Offering your blessings
- ✓ Creating a symbol or talisman
- ✓ Completion
- ✓ Feasting

You can find more suggestions and ideas in my book *Mother Blessings*. All women deserve to be honored, celebrated and nurtured throughout all the season of our lives. I think it's your turn.

Anna Stewart, mother, mentor and author, has published over 300 articles. Her book, *Mother Blessings: Honoring Women Becoming Mothers*, is an artful guide for creating ceremonies for pregnant women or families adopting. Order it at www.wovenword.com or call 1-888-773-7738. She also serves as an instructor for coaching pregnant women through the Academy for Coaching Parents (www.acpi.biz). Go to her website, www.motherhands.com for more information.