

How to Get a Tarot Reading

by Anita Legsdin

You walk into a small bookstore, or a meditation supply store. A sign in the window announces that a tarot reader is on the premises. The person behind the counter asks if you want a reading. "Hmm," you answer. You've never had one before.

Maybe you've always been curious, but had no idea what to ask. Or maybe you're uncomfortable with the thought of someone walking through your mind like it was a department store. Some people say "I just don't want to know what will happen."

Here are some pointers on what to ask and expect, as well as some background on tarot cards themselves.

Tarot cards are a set of pictures that represent archetypes. There are many different kinds of tarot decks, and the reader picks one or two that fit best with their world view. The pictures are meant to trigger associations that relate to the question asked. Reading tarot cards bears a resemblance to interpreting Rorschach inkblots: the images are meant to evoke subconscious feelings. The idea is that by free-associating, we get in touch with our intuition, which is typically more insightful than our logical mind. If you are advanced enough to recognize different tarot decks, you should ask the reader which deck they use; this might tell you in advance whether or not

the reader is a good match for you.

Because tarot is a set of images, the success of a reading is largely determined by how open-minded the reader is (not to mention how much native psychic ability they have). Similarly, the best readers know that you determine your own future by the choices you make.

The best that a reading can do is show you what will result from various possible paths you might take. For this reason, the best questions are never ones with a yes or no answer. Don't go to the tarot reader to ask if you're pregnant; you can buy a home pregnancy kit for that. Instead, ask what kind of a life you can expect if you become involved with a particular person. Or, what is it like to work for a certain company?

You should always approach a reading with a certain amount of skepticism. This will protect you from the con artists who claim there's a curse on your head, and for a mere \$5,000 they will get rid of it for you. Just don't be skeptical to the point of being stubbornly resistant. Tarot is one of many tools available to aid in decision-making. Don't write it off because of one bad experience. All information you receive from many sources can help you choose between various options.

On the other hand, you may be the kind of person who clearly understands where you want to go and what you have to do to get

there. If this is you — if you rarely have any doubts about what you want to do — then asking advice of any kind, especially consulting a tarot reader, is out of the question.

There are times when an outcome is out of our control — for example, after we've applied for a job and have been interviewed, and we're waiting to hear the outcome — and if this is the case, a tarot reader could answer questions like "What do they think of me," or "How do I compare with the other candidates?"

When you're getting a reading, listen. Don't point to a card and ask, "What does that card mean?" The best readers read the spread as a whole, and the cards in relation to one another. The Lovers card next to the Empress, for example, will have a different meaning than if it were next to the Devil, or the Hermit, or the Nine of Swords. Also, in most

readings the position of a card is significant, and can affect the interpretation. The Lovers card as the outcome is vastly different than the Lovers card as an expression of the conflict. So, if you point to a card and ask what it means, the better readers will think (if not say outright), "If you've been listening to me, that's what I've been trying to explain."

Resist clapping your hands and saying, "Oh, goodie!" if you see the Lovers card in your reading. In some decks, and according to some readers, this card represents a choice between duty and desire, between wealth and position or fun and poverty. Let the reader read the cards.

Almost as bad as asking a yes/no ques-

tion is not asking what's really on your mind. One person who paid for a half hour reading shrugged his shoulders when I asked him what he wanted to know. "I dunno," he said. "I don't have any special question." So I did a general reading for him. Eventually it came out that he was getting over being dumped by his girlfriend, and wanted to know how long he'd have to wait before his love life was progressing again. But by that time, he only had 10 minutes left in the reading, and we didn't have time to cover what he was most interested in.

Some people think that the reader is always psychic, and therefore they never need to verbalize a question. "I'll focus on my question, you just go ahead and shuffle the cards." Although some readers do operate like that, most do not. It isn't fair to withhold information from the reader, you get less



for your money that way.

A tarot reading can help clarify the influences working on you, so that you can make decisions with a clearer mind. Many people want to know that they're making the "right" choice. But the simple truth is that as long as you're willing to accept the consequences, there is nothing in this life you have to do. Tarot can help describe what those consequences might be.

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Managing a Compassionate Life

Continued from Page 16

later your throat is feeling better but your stomach is still cramping. You make the hard decision to put off your trip for a few days and go back to the doctor. If you don't get better will you cancel the trip? Can you trust that letting go of an outcome will result in it all working out for the best?

A compassionate definition of discipline includes a commitment to doing what you do as an act of self-love. Can you connect with a true feeling of "letting go, letting God?" Can you give yourself permission to be at ease with this? Letting go of your travel plans is an act of self-love because worrying about the money you're losing or blaming yourself for getting sick will not soothe your stomach, and very well might make it worse. Walking a path of compassion may be simple and it is seldom easy. A helpful tool towards attaining a compassionate attitude that would be useful in this example includes transform-

ing yearning into gratitude.

When we are in yearning we reach outside our present world and spend a lot of our energy invested in future potential rather than present reality. To be in the present, we need to radically accept ourselves just the way we are and we need to accept our situation as it is, not how we want it or wish it to be. Gratitude is always in the present and it is a great way to anchor ourselves in the moment. Unfortunately, it is difficult to feel thankful when you are heartsick with disappointment and writhing with a stomach ache.

You might say to yourself, "I see myself trying to let go of the outcome though I am worried, sick and disappointed. I see myself attempting to feel grateful for this situation. And I just can't do it right now. But wow, I am choosing self compassion and I can be grateful for that! This gives me faith in myself and gratitude for my strength." By trying to manifest compassion by searching for faith and gratitude, you actually

do. This creates a wonderful feedback loop once you get the hang of it and helps you progress along your spiritual path.

It may not be easy to be kinder to and more positive to yourself; many of us have a lifetime of experience doing the opposite to overcome. Give yourself permission to ask for help reframing your reactions. Enlist friends, family and professionals who support your commitment to self-acceptance and the attitudinal shifts that cultivate compassion.

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