

Little Teacher Descriptions

The cards are open to your interpretation, but for those of you interested, here are some small descriptions of how I see each one as a teacher. If you have been wondering what ways there are to use your cards, I offer a few suggestions:

-draw one or multiple and ask yourself how they're showing up in your life as teachers currently

-draw one or multiple and ask yourself what you've learned from these teachers in the past

-If you have a bit of time, slowly go through every card one by one and ask yourself what you have learned from each card or ask yourself how that card is showing up in your life currently

-some people like to ask questions and draw a card. I make no claims to having put magic of any kind into these cards, but if that is something you enjoy or that helps you, then I do encourage it

Death: Death is the teacher who teaches us to be present and to be grateful. Death reminds us that everything changes and nothing is permanent. It is a reminder to be in the moment, make the most of your life, and to love fully. Death gently encourages us to express our appreciation of those we love, and learn to come to terms with impermanence. See what you can learn from making a practice of remembering your mortality.

Emotions: Our emotions show us what our brain can't see. They let us know when something feels good, or doesn't, even if we don't know why. If something makes us feel afraid, we can learn what drives our fear. If something makes us feel joyful, we can learn what it is that makes us happy. Our emotions teach us what our psychological needs are. Pay attention to your emotions – notice which emotions show up when something happens, ask yourself where they are coming from, what they indicate about your personal needs, and what you can do in response. Our emotions are valuable and sometimes, ruthless teachers.

Openness: When we are open, we are more receptive to all learning. If someone is giving us information, and we are caught up in our own opinions or judgements, we block ourselves from hearing what they have to say, and deprive ourselves from learning. Being open doesn't mean we have to accept or agree with everything that comes our way. It simply means to observe, and understand the best we can, without getting lost in our ego, our fears, our thoughts. Being open invites new experiences, which invites new learning.

Pain: Pain can be a difficult teacher, and one of the most valuable. If something is uncomfortable, it often means you're growing. Feeling pain in your heart shows you what is important to you. If you experience something that hurts you inside, ask yourself what it's showing you. Just as when a tooth hurts, it is indicating that it needs attention- your pain is trying to help you. Pain also reminds us of our strength. Going through a painful experience and coming out the other side shows us we can survive more than we believe, and it prepares us for the next time we go through a painful experience.

Change: Change teaches us about adaptation. It reminds us that nothing lasts forever, and that we need to know how to flow with the changes that happen around us. Change also introduces us to new things, things we may not have been exposed to before, which is always a learning opportunity. Change reminds that nothing is permanent, and that we can only appreciate the moment as it happens.

Courage: Courage helps us dive into learning experiences. Often the biggest opportunities for growth are the most uncomfortable, and require courage to go forth. Courage helps us to take risks, and to try new things. Every time you are afraid to do something, and you do it anyway, you are learning. Courage can also lead to failure, which is a fantastic teacher! Every time your courage leads to failure, you should thank it warmly.

Compassion: Compassion is an incredible teacher, particularly when it comes to understanding people. It is the antidote to anger. If someone makes us angry, and we are able to take a moment and try to understand in what way they may be afraid or suffering, it invokes our compassion, and this softens anger. Compassion can take down the walls that prevent us from connecting with others (which is where big learning happens!). The next time someone makes you angry, try and empathize with them, and see if you can spot their vulnerability.

See what your compassion teaches you. **Nature:** In all cultures across the world, nature is one of our oldest teachers. It is a never-ending source of metaphor we use for teaching and learning about our own lives. It is also a place we can go to quiet our minds and hear our inner-most voices. Most importantly, it is our reminder of the wonder of the universe. When we look at a sunset or an ocean or the sky, we can be lifted out of our everyday troubles and remember where we are and what we are a part of. When you find yourself alone in nature, ask it what it has to teach you.

Silence: Silence creates the space for us to observe and receive. When we ourselves are silent, we create room for others to teach us. When we surround ourselves with silence, we make room for our own thoughts. When we silence our thoughts, we make room for embodied learning and experience.

Beauty: When we experience beauty - either through music, art, nature, connection - we let our guard down. In our desire to receive what is before us, we become more receptive to lessons and insights (think of how differently your mind behaves when you are listening to an debate compared to when you are listening to a story or poem). Beauty also brings us into the present and allow us to experience awe and wonder. Notice what differences you experience in your body, mind, and heart, when you witness something beautiful.

Connection: Each living creature is a wealth of wisdom and experience. Connecting with those living creatures, whether they be human, animal, or plant, creates pathways for us to learn from each other. The more different the other being is from ourselves, the more we have to learn from them. This is why it is so important to try and form connections with people who our very different from ourselves. It allows us to widen our perspective and increase our empathy. In addition to being a great teacher, connection can bring a sense of fulfillment to our lives.

Solitude: Like silence, solitude creates space. When we take a break from the stimulation of other people, it can allow us to remember who we are outside of our connections to them. Solitude picks us up out of a space in which we have a perceived identity. That perceived identity is important, but also builds a box around who we believe ourselves to be. If we can step out of that box, we have the opportunity to have new experiences and discover new parts of ourselves. Finding solitude may mean going on a trip, or it may mean going for a walk, or it may mean not being in a romantic relationship for a while. See what you can learn from decreasing social stimulation, and external perceptions.

Fear: Fear is a difficult teacher to ignore. It is a reminder of all the learning we have already done around what appears to be unsafe. It can reveal to us what we value. Your fear is trying to protect you, so don't be cross with it. Give it gratitude, and have a look at what it means that you feel fear in that particular situation. If you are afraid of public speaking, it may mean you value how you are seen. If you are afraid of change, it may mean you value stability. If you are afraid and you don't know why, then that means there's some real exploring to do! Our fears aren't always rational; much of the time they're not. But that doesn't mean they don't have something to teach us.

Play: Play brings us out of our heads and into the present. Play reminds us how important it is not to take ourselves too seriously. It opens up our creativity and connects us to others. Play teaches us how to come back into the wisdom we know as children – the wisdom of being present, and in constant wonder.

Rationality: Probably the least romantic-sounding of the Little Teachers, I found this one to be important. So often we find ourselves having irrational thoughts or feelings and the only thing that can ground us to reality, is the pure knowledge of actual facts and rationality. Emotions are powerful, and can get in the way of us seeing clearly, so it can be very handy to have your mind to tell you what is actually probably going on. Friends are especially helpful here, able to offer rational perspective when we may be clouded by emotion or bias. If not a teacher, Rationality is at the very least a good grounder.

Time: There is a reason most of us become wiser as we age. Some lessons can only be learnt over long periods of time, and can take even longer to truly integrate. As we gain more experience, we have more context within which to absorb each new experience, and that shapes how we view the world around us. Time teaches us patience, and reminds us that things are in constant flux. It is another teacher that reminds us not to take the moment for granted.

Body: Our bodies are constantly sending us signals we can learn from. What is your body language telling you about your mood or comfort level? Are you crossing your arms and protecting your abdomen? Is your body

turned towards a particular person? Are you hunched and withdrawn? Or puffed up and big? Does your body respond in a certain way when people bring up certain topics? Or when someone walks into the room? If you can't figure out which emotions you're experiencing, your body can be a great indicator, so begin by naming your body sensations, and see where that takes you. If your heart is racing, you may be nervous or excited. If you suddenly feel tired and heavy, you may be overwhelmed or stressed. Our bodies are our direct connection to the physical world around us and can behave as physical manifestations of our experience of that world.

Spirituality: Even if you don't consider yourself to be spiritual, there is still much to be learned from the different spiritualities of the world. They are reflections of a culture's values, they contain stories with lessons, and they offer wisdom that you can choose to receive without subscribing to any religion. Whatever a person's form of spirituality may be - practicing a religion, practicing mindfulness, connecting with nature, creating art, connecting with people - all these things have the capacity to make us feel a sense of something greater than what we see. You can call this god, you can call this collective consciousness, you can call this connection, love, spirit, source, science... Whatever it is, it reminds us that we are alive and that that's a remarkable thing.

Patience: As we age, we learn more and more how valuable this teacher can be. Patience teaches us that everything passes. If you are experiencing challenges, and you remember to be patient because those challenges will pass, it can reduce stress around the situation. When we bring patience into our work it allows us not to rush things, which will often produce richer results. Having patience with the people around us keeps us from getting frustrated with them, and allows space for mistakes to be made and learning to occur. Patience in your relationships will also reduce conflict and increase empathy.

Trust: Trust teaches us how to be open and how to let go of control. When we trust another person, we make ourselves vulnerable, which opens us to connection. Trusting people means taking risks and opening ourselves up to new experiences. When we mistrust, we build walls, which block us from learning and from teaching. Trusting another person means putting yourself at risk and seeing what they have to offer, and every person has a lifetime of wisdom to offer.

Imagination: Our imaginations are tools we use for problem-solving and for coming up with new ideas. We use our imaginations to empathize and to try and understand what another person is feeling. We use our imaginations to play out possible outcomes of our actions. In addition to this, we can use our imaginations to trick ourselves in constructive ways. You might visualize a calm place to make yourself feel relaxed and safe. Or you might imagine the life of someone less privileged than you, in order to increase gratitude and perspective on your own situation. Your imagination can also tell you what your fears are. If you ever find yourself playing out horrible scenarios in your mind without even realizing you're doing it, that may be an indication of what your subconscious is fixating on.

Humility: When we remember how small we are, we remember how much we have to learn. Humility allows us to step down from our pedestals and see the world with an open perspective. We have to be humble in order to learn because it means admitting to ourselves and others that we don't know everything. When we get wrapped up in thinking we know everything about something, it prevents us from seeking new learning. It also takes great humility to admit to a mistake, which is where the greatest learning happens. See if you can make a regular practice of admitting to at least one mistake a day. The more cringey it feels, the more learning there is to be had!

Love: I have no words for this one...ask your heart.