



Tarot for Life

Reading the Cards for Everyday Guidance and Growth

By Paul Quinn

-Excerpt from *Reading the Tarot-*

Intimate Conversations: *Reading for Yourself*

**“There is only one journey. Going inside yourself.”
- Rainer Maria Rilke**

Doing readings for yourself is like having a heart-to-heart dialogue with up to seventy-eight parts of yourself. In fact, the same cards will sometimes come back to converse again and again. My friend Ben went through a period where the mournful Five of Cups showed up in nearly every reading he did for himself. When the persistent card even popped up in answer to his question “What energy should I bring to my social life?” he was ready to permanently yank it from the deck!

Whether repetitively appearing cards vex or comfort us, like recurring dreams they are trying to get our attention. The beauty of the Tarot is that we can use it as a tool for consciously grasping the messages sent from the unconscious—the Magician acting in concert with the High Priestess. The better we know and trust ourselves, the greater the clarity of our solo readings.

Nevertheless, reading for yourself can be challenging. Fixed attitudes about the issue in question may blind you to the cards’ true message. Fear of misreading a card may constipate your intuition. If you are highly self-critical you are apt to exaggerate the negative aspects of the spread. While it is ultimately for our benefit to *work through* these obstacles—becoming clearer channels to Self and Source—sometimes the best thing we can do is take a walk outdoors and come back to it later. Or walk away from it altogether.

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The biggest obstacle to getting a clear reading is anxiety about the question. Once, while heading downstairs on my way to the airport, I missed a step and watched my ankle bend at a nasty angle. The pain paled in comparison to worries that my injury might prevent me from enjoying my eagerly awaited conference in Minneapolis. Even worse, if I *did* make the trip I might need to find a doctor, get X-rays, or God forbid, a cast—any of which would present a major logistical hassle so far from home.

To my relief I was able to make my way back upstairs with only an occasional wince. I grabbed an ice pack and, with only minutes to decide whether I should risk making the trip, pulled out my cards. Self-pity, the nearing flight departure, and mounting frustration at the almost certain self-sabotage of my mishap made it difficult to concentrate. With life-or-death intensity I asked, “What does my spirit say about going to Minneapolis with my foot in this condition?” The triumphant Six of Wands turned up—reversed. I snapped the cards back into their container.

“I’m not going,” I announced stoically to my partner, Rich. “You’ll be fine, Paul” he said. “You’re able to walk on it, right? Just keep ice on it again when you get to the hotel. You’ll be sitting during the majority of the conference anyway.” Fortunately, my intuition told me to follow his advice, not the cards’. I wound up having a wonderful time with full mobility and only intermittent aches.

The moral to the story is, if you’re all worked up about the question, don’t read the cards. If you went to a reader who was as agitated about your question as you were, you’d look around for the exit doors. Anxiety is a psychic block. At sharp enough levels it can create a negative attraction in the reading (to say nothing of its effects on your day), causing cards to appear that completely distort the truth of the situation and have you believing the worst. Therefore, it is best to create a measure of High Priestess-like detachment from the issue before you attempt the reading, even for questions that don’t raise your pulse. Allow yourself to become curious without getting overly serious.

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If you find that difficult, try a little role-playing. Pretend you are reading for someone who happens to have your name. While shuffling and calling in guidance refer to yourself and your question in the third person: “Michelle (that’s you) wants to know about the integrity of the proposition being offered to her.” Then stay in the role and proceed to give “her” a reading. It just might give you the distance you need to get out of your own way and see your issue clearly.

When *Not* to Read for Yourself

“To love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance.”
- Oscar Wilde

You’re feeling spacey. Tarot readings demand mindful presence. If you feel tired, scattered, or sluggish, you probably lack the energy and concentration to be a clear channel for your reading, let alone apprehend its meaning. Steer clear of the cards unless you are able to thoroughly ground yourself first. (see Grounding and Clearing)

You’re down on yourself. The best Tarot readers are compassionate advocates for their querants, helping them to see the higher good in even the most troubling spreads. Yet, the same readers may be pessimistic and judgmental when reading for themselves. Anger, worry, or periods of low esteem compound the tendency for finding the worst in your reading (and therefore in yourself). As a rule, always read for yourself as if you were reading for someone you love. If emotions prevent you from being able to do this, wait until you’re feeling more generous toward yourself before you pick up the cards.

You’re obsessed. If you don’t understand the cards that appeared the first time, set the intention to receive a more clear response and calmly shuffle again. However, if you don’t agree with or trust the responses you get, doing multiple readings in hope of “better” answers will only intensify your turmoil. If you have a strong attachment to seeing the spread turn out in a certain way, re-examine your motives for doing the reading.