

TAROT FOR THE WILD SOUL

Episode 248. Imperfect Humans, Imperfect Ancestors

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(Instrumental intro music)

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Welcome to Tarot for the Wild Soul, a podcast that explores the Tarot through an inclusive, soul centered, trauma-informed perspective for growth, healing, and evolution. I'm your host, Lindsay Mack.

Hello, Wild Souls, and welcome back to Tarot for the Wild Soul podcast. As always, I'm just so incredibly honored, delighted, excited to be gathered with all of you today. Thank you so much for being here with me. So, we have a question to kind of continue on our theme of exploring spirally-led intuition in honor of my brand new live and guided intuition course called *Intuition as a Spiral*, which is open for enrollment for another...week? *(Lindsay laughs)* I'm looking at my calendar, trying to remember when this episode comes out. Another week, yes. It closes on October 30th. Time has no meaning anymore. I received this question from Ashley and oh, boy, is it a good one? It's all about ancestors. So, I'm going to read it. Ashley asks,

Hi, Lindsay. My question is about our spirit guides, specifically our ancestors from this life, and how we know we can trust them. Certainly, our ancestors were imperfect humans, and many people from the past had beliefs and practices that I would not condone or be aligned with. How do you think about the guidance of our formerly human ancestors and how we can trust them?

So, I just want to acknowledge a couple of things right out of the gate that I actually think are just part and parcel to answering this. Number one, I'm a white person, a white person with

ancestral lineage that is both very magical to me and that I feel very intimate and privileged to feel very intimate and close with. I'm privileged to know about some of my ancestors. I'm privileged to have written word passed down from elders who have passed. I'm privileged to know where my ancestors immigrated from. And I am descended from colonizers of what is now called the United States of America. And as a white person—especially as a white person in a spiritual and helping craft and practice—I am prone (*Lindsay laughs*) without awareness, without call-ins, without education, I have to... I am absolutely capable of causing harm, like even my space in a room or in a conversation. My ancestors caused tremendous harm. So I want to, and I am seeking to cause as little harm as possible, understanding that as somebody who was raised within the ocean of white supremacy and has benefited from that, and has also taught—before I was more educated or understood or benefited from the education of Black, indigenous educators and folks in this field—absolutely did stuff that was appropriative, worked with decks that I would never work with now. So I just need to bring that into the space right here and now to just simply acknowledge the fact that for a white person to talk about working with ancestors, I think there needs to be an acknowledgement first of all of that.

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I'm also going to acknowledge my very humble, very personal... Because I'm very aware of the power that I have inside of this kind of a platform. I'm speaking to people and you're listening to me as potentially a guidepost and a teacher and somebody who probably, and I say this with like, "knows what they're talking about"™, which I beg of you not to pedestalize any teacher or guide or podcast host. Because really, who the fuck am I? And I'm also aware of the power dynamic inside of this kind of a conversation. And that just even by me being a part of this conversation and having a podcast that folks listen to, my whiteness has likely contributed to that. So, all of that acknowledged.

There are innumerable cultures, belief systems around working with ancestors, and I do not speak for those cultures. I also bow to those cultures and honor those cultures. So there are some folks, one lovely person in one of my classes who just very gently passed through to me that inside of their ancestry, their lineage, like, "We work with every ancestor. It doesn't matter what they've done." For some people, white or not, that's not something that they feel comfortable or safe doing, regardless of culture and regardless of sort of lineage or belief system. So inside of this conversation, I just kind of want to...I still feel called to talk about whiteness. I still feel called to speak on it—so just acknowledging that and calling myself in there—because I have incredibly harmful, harm-causing ancestors. And I have personally found a way that working with them and understanding the work that I'm here to do with all of the

ancestors that I have, and the specific... Because I think there are two broad ways that I personally feel comfortable working with ancestry that doesn't disclude anybody, and also holds my boundaries about who I'm available to receive guidance from in my channel.

So I just want to say that this is Lindsay's humble, experiential, anecdotal word on ancestors due to and from what has helped me in my personal, personally led, heart-led practice with myself. I didn't learn an ancestral practice from anybody. I didn't receive one from anybody. There's nobody to really acknowledge lineage toward. That doesn't mean that I've not maybe picked up things in the soup with other people. I talked about this actually on [Becca Piastrelli's Belonging podcast](#), so if you're interested in hearing a lot more of my thoughts globally on it, I shared a lot of this there as well. So just to acknowledge all of that, and to offer up an enormous bow of respect to everybody listening to this from any walk, from any culture, from whatever and wherever you are in your practice of working with drawing strength from ancestors, whether you know your ancestors or not, whether that's an enormous wound point for you, as it is for so many: some folks from their journey with adoption, some folks from their journey with being forcibly taken from their country of origin and brought to another place, being uprooted from their ancestral home. This is a...it's a fraught conversation, and so I just want to proceed with the deepest bow of respect and the deepest acknowledgement of my own complicity inside of those systems, and my ancestors' complicity inside of those systems, and that I'm deeply sorry for that. Truly.

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So please do take what works for you inside of this and leave what doesn't work, not as a way of getting off the hook for anything that might need a gentle call-in, but just to say that before proceeding here. (*Lindsay laughs*) For some people listening to this, you might be like, "Oh my God, it's not this complicated." And I would gently just say, because I do get some emails from people about that, and I would say it is, actually. It is that complicated, at least to me. Maybe that's Virgo Rising in me, but I feel like it's complicated. So Ashley, having said this, I'm deeply honored that you're trusting me with this question and I'm going to do my best around it. And the reason that I sort of proceeded in that way is because I do think that regardless of the story that we're telling ourselves, the idea of working with ancestors is fraught for many. For others, it is not, so I'm also honoring that too. You might be like, "This is not a big deal to me," and so I think that's wonderful, too.

What I want to start with is the idea that for me, again, in this sort of personal sensibility I have about working with ancestors, I think that it is an option. So I want to just start right there. We

don't have to deliberately call in or work with our ancestors, especially around specific situations. That's not essential. That's not crucial. We don't have to do that. So I want to begin there, that you... I'm not saying you have the option to opt out, but that there is a choice about... Because we're talking about our own personal practice here. This is something that belongs to us, that is a birthright for us, so we get to work our way up to that. And I believe that working with one's ancestors is an incredibly important thing *and* we get to take our time with it.

Two, for some people, for a million reasons, it's absolutely unsafe. They have zero connection, but they have very broad connections to other kind of facets of their Spirit helpers. That's okay. And I just want to say, we are unconditionally supported by all of our Spirit helpers, and our ancestors are but a slice of that pie. For some folks, ancestor work is crucially important. It represents the larger piece of the pie. So again, just trying to honor as many embodied practices as possible here. For me, and in my experience coming from not only broadly a group of people who were, again, a part of culture that colonized what is now called the United States. That is a big thing to be with, but also people who specifically caused tremendous harm, many of them, that I know about. I was raised by, lived with ancestors who were harmed by those ancestors on both sides of my family. So I'm not saying that that's not true for everyone's family line. We have millions upon billions of ancestors, if we're talking about our entire web of ancestry.

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So the first thing that I want to begin with here is by acknowledging that for those of us who are descended or identify as white, because a lot of our ancestors caused colonial harm, broad harm, harm related to colonization, and because we were socialized within the context of white supremacy, which—and we have to be mindful of this, a lot of us—that we do have a tendency as white folks, to opt out of things. And I think because many of... I know for myself, the socialization that I received from my white ancestors were, “Don't make a big deal. Don't be too loud, too dramatic, too blah, blah, blah in public. Keep your emotions to yourself. Keep it neat and pretty on the outside, and that's what you show people.” So to dive into the ugly marrow of things, which is necessary for interrogation of oppressive systems, including our spiritual practices and where we may be complicit in some harm inside of them, it's a huge thing, right? And I'm not making an excuse, but it's a huge thing. And we do have a tendency—I know I do—to divide it up and say, “Well, these were the bad ones and these are the good ones. So how do I keep the bad ones at bay?”

I also think that extends itself cross-culturally right? We do that with Tarot cards. It's a perfect litmus test like: these are "bad cards"; these are "good cards". These are the cards you want; these are the cards you don't. So I want to begin by just saying that that's natural, and that there may be some ancestors that we are absolutely unavailable to ever receive connection from, ever receive guidance from. We get to state that, period. That's a full sentence. If we state within a drop-in, "I am unavailable to ever be visited, receive guidance. This person is not welcome inside of this filter, this space," they won't come. And if they do, you can tell them to go away and not come back. That we're allowed to do, that. Boundaries are a birthright, you know? And unlike human beings, Spirit helpers are bound to that. It is a free will universe. So if we say no, they can't cross that line in that dimension.

I totally understand why we would not want to communicate or receive guidance from certain ancestors and yet, what I would like to invite folks into considering, if this is a part of an area of concern for you, every single human being in your family line has caused harm. Everyone. And I am not excusing egregious harms, humanitarian level crisis harms, like profound evil harms. I'm not excusing those harms. Every human is imperfect, every single one. So if we want to eliminate the imperfect ones, we will have nobody. The other thing that I want to say is some of our ancestors who may have been harmful, may have been complicated, can be some of our finest teachers.

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And I want to just kind of dovetail into that by picking up on a thread that I was expanding upon, as I was talking over the last few minutes, which is something I talked about on Becca's podcast, that I think there's broadly two different avenues of work that we do with our ancestors. One is healing their legacy, going beyond and farther than what they left behind for us, and working with other ancestors to... Working with other ancestors alongside Spirit guides in terms of our overall evolution. Both are kind of the same, but they are different avenues. So I do believe that when we cross over on the other side of the veil, we come back to our soul form, right? And our soul form is very wise. It's very multifaceted and it's, I think, overall benevolent at its essence and its core. So, the ancestors who may have behaved in their embodied life in a certain way may not be taking that with them on the other side of...now that they're on the other side of the Veil. I have seen that with my own ancestors, that their energy is different. They're complicit. They're sorry. They acknowledge, right, at least in my channeled work with them. There's some that I've never heard from because some of them, I don't think, come through in that way. They're not here to do that work with us.

So if we have an ancestor that is harmful, that is tricky, that we don't want to work with, that we're concerned about somehow letting in, what I would say to that is that we are all in the web with our ancestors, right? We're here to... All of us have had ancestors that have caused harm. I speak and I'm here as somebody who comes from them. And we do ancestral work not necessarily by connecting and communicating with those ancestors, but by being aware of the legacy they left, and opting to go further than it to make our lives a living amends from the harms that were caused. There is also... Personally, that can sometimes live in us and radiate out collectively. There are plenty of times, for plenty of reasons where I am experiencing a moment of pleasure in one way or another, because it does show up in one way or another, and this tremendous amount of shame can sometimes bubble up like, "This is so bad. This is so wrong," like stuff with the body, stuff with food, whatever. It's purely ancestral. And so by me climaxing and not feeling bad about that, or welcoming the feelings and tending to them while saying yes to the pleasure that's there, or by eating that delicious thing without feeling bad about it, I am healing my ancestral legacy. The ancestors that may have left that legacy of shame, it's a healing not just for me but for them. But those ancestors, they're not coming through when I'm channeling stuff down because it's a different scope of work. So, we do reparative work with those ancestors.

And I think that there is a... I mean, I don't *know* it to be true, but it has certainly felt true for me that there is a kind of an ordering and a kind of a division of responsibility that happens up there, where certain ancestors just don't show up as a part of the circle of counsel. Like, if you're sitting down to ask a question or to check in about something, I don't feel those ancestors in the mix. So that's one way that ancestors can be of service to us is when we do get that bubbling up of like, "Pleasure's not okay for me," or "I'm bad," like just a general feeling of like, "I'm bad. I'm wrong," which is certainly something I carry that totally came from shit my abusive parents said, but also it runs in my family. And by me being like, of course, I'm not bad (*Lindsay laughs*). I'm good. I am. I'm a good person. And I'm also a good person who has totally done shitty things, things that have been harmful, things I deeply regret, like you. It's not an excuse. It's a full-hearted acknowledgement of, like, absolutely. You know?

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By me acknowledging those feelings, working with them, looking at them right in the eye, being very accountable for those moments when I've slipped up, messed up, really regret something, it's ancestral work. It is. Being aware of settler harm, of colonial harm, of our complicity in white supremacy, that is ancestral work. And that's not me, Lindsay. That is the work of... Like, I am not the first person to say that (*Lindsay laughs*), you know? This is spiritual work, right, both

personal stuff that we have and collective harms that we may have been complicit in. So, that's one avenue.

The other avenue is the avenue of receiving counsel from. So I want to explain a little bit about how we...what makes sense for me. I engage in a pretty rigorous drop-in practice that I have found really helps with what you're speaking to, Ashley, which is that when I drop in, which is a word and a phrase that some may use, some may not. It's not a magical thing that I made up. It's just a practice of before I ask a question, pull a card, tune in with Spirit, I will pause and I will do a very casual version of dropping into my channel and asking to receive guidance that's in my highest and best from my Spirit helpers. My Spirit helpers are consistent of whomever and whatever is out there for me: Guides, angels, ancestors, elementals, other energetic beings. We don't have to know who they are, or know their name, or know exactly who they are to receive guidance from them. Your Spirit helpers are your benevolent, helpful support systems that are here with guidance and advice that's in your highest and best, and in the highest and best of everyone around you.

Consent matters. And that's one of the ways that we create consent in the spiritual realm is by opening to and leaning into that drop-in as a framework for guardrails, for boundaries, and for joyful exploration within a space that's very tight and that's very well-filtered. So by going through that drop-in and stating what we're available to receive, the ancestors that are still doing work, that are really better for that Avenue, (a) they're not going to come through there. But the ancestors that will come through, I think, within that filter that we're setting up for us are going to be in concert with that sense of wisdom that will be of the greatest degree of help. So it's not that ancestors who've caused harm don't go inside of that filtration system, because they do because all ancestors have caused harm. Some may be completely outside of the scope of what we would ever imagine or what we would ever do. And it may be that in their crossing beyond the veil, in the other lifetimes they've led, they have actually a lot to say to us about repair, about surrender, about forgiveness, about amends. There's a lot. And even taking it out of that context, there are a lot of ancestors who have tremendous gifts to share around all kinds of different things. And there are times when ancestors can show up and we can recognize... Like, it can almost switch back and forth. I know there's one ancestor I have who often shows up as this just incredibly grounding, benevolent, helpful guide in certain moments and then will show up as a panic voice in other moments, and I've gotten really good at figuring all that out.

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I actually pulled a card for this question and I asked, like, how do we navigate the question that's being asked? How do we negotiate what it is to open to the wisdom of ancestors, if that's a part of our practice, if we want to, if we choose to do that? And how do we make sense of trusting them? And I pulled Four of Cups and what I really got from that was like, Four of Cups is an embodiment of the... First of all, it's a card of huge emotional digestion, giving ourselves space to make sense of something. It also is a boundary card and also is us saying, "No, thank you. No, thank you." So this is a powerful card because there are other boundary cards in the Tarot that are... Very specifically, Two of Swords and Queen of Swords. But interestingly enough, and something that I don't think I had ever made the connection around, Four of Cups is the only boundary card where something's being offered and we are saying, "I don't want that, no," which is powerful because that kind of detail is not present in those other two cards that I named, right? We're taking space, we're going within, but we're not saying no. We're not leaning into our own clarity around that. And some of us are making sense of how to trust that and how to open to it and feel into it more and more.

So I say this... I loved that this card came up because not only do I think that it holds a space for what I'm mentioning, but it also opens us up to this idea that the drop-in is in and of itself, a way of saying, "I am available to receive guidance from any helper in the Spirit realm who has my highest and best in mind, that holds a very high level of wisdom, and that is here to be of service to this question." You know? And that is basically saying anybody who does not fit that bill will get filtered out of the system; is us saying, "No, thank you." So I would say a drop-in is extremely helpful, which kind of is not an auto filter, but I think it is a very, very powerful filter. Pulling a card for ourselves personally, because we all have very personal relationships with our own relationship with ancestors: what we're doing with those ancestors, how we're working with those ancestors, how we're repairing, leaving a different legacy than our ancestors either did or were able to leave, and being guided and led by ancestors who maybe didn't have the capacity to go as far as we do in one area or another. There's tremendously layered work inside of this. And you also may opt out of it at any time because, again, it's up to you and your level of comfort. And as I said, again, if there's anybody in particular that you're just like, "Never, ever, ever, ever," do a ceremony for yourself and just state that. Be like, "I'm never available to have this person come in. And if they do, I'm gonna say, 'Go away and don't come back.'"

So just because they... And this may be controversial, or I don't think it's at all controversial, but there just may be some folks who don't agree with me. And again, I think that's okay. I really do. I really think that's alright. Just because they did something that you did not condone, or you do not align with when they were alive, does not necessarily mean... I'm not saying that it's not

valid because that can be, again, a full stop period. “This person did this thing. Absolutely not. I will never be open to them coming through in any way, shape, or form.” And again, our Spirit helpers will respect that. They will not cross that line with us. That ancestor will not cross that line with you, period. But just because they did something in their lifetime that we didn't condone or is not aligned, does not mean they cannot be of service to us in the way that they are coming through, in the way that they are being of service to us.

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Again, I think that it's an extremely spiralic... Like, I'm thinking of an ancestor of mine, a great great grandfather on my father's side who caused a lot of harm, allegedly robbed people in their home, and had a bunch of families. There is a very strong sense of shame, of badness, of hiding, of secrets, of lies that I have felt inside of myself since I was very, very young. And every time I tell the truth about something difficult, every time that I befriend my shame and notice it rather than believe it, every time I tend to the little kid part of myself that was really wrapped up in that way, younger than they should have been—there's a healing, not just for me but for that parent, that parent's father, that parent's father, for the being that caused the harm. Now, does that ancestor come through and work with me? I don't necessarily know. But they are here and we are doing work together. But it's not as linearly as them coming through the channel into our space. I hope that makes sense. In that way, all ancestors are worthy ancestors to work with, but they do have their own place on the pie as to how they are of greatest use to us, and we of greatest use to them. And so we know that with every relationship, we have choice in that. We don't have to talk to any ancestor if we don't want to, you know? And know that, again, that doesn't preclude us from doing work with them in some way, because we will inevitably (*Lindsay laughs*). Their stuff will come through our channel in some other way. Not because it's muddying anything, but because we are here to further that. We are here to heal things, wounds left unhealed, you know?

It's part of... I'm so reminded of this because I'm raising a child in an environment that I am privileged enough to have be stable, secure, and not just secure like basic needs met, but delight, and laughter, and ease, and joy, and presence, and body positivity, and respect, and consent, and all that happening at like a year-and-a-half old. And all of those things have been conscious choices that have been made because of the lack of them being present in both mine and my partner's raising. So there's massive ancestor work going on. And every time we are with a living member of our family we're like, wow. That provides a lot of context, like seeing them around our kid, seeing whatever...or not around our kid.

So (*Lindsay sighs*) that is my... I mean, I think that's fairly detailed. But that is what I have to say on this question. Ashley, I hope it's been helpful. I know it hasn't been a very direct answer to your question, but I think more directly, again, utilizing a drop-in and working with that Four of Cups container, knowing you can say, "No, thank you." But I would actually love to point your attention on who you're saying yes to, who you're welcoming in, and being very clear about what you're available for. And knowing and trusting that whenever we're encountering anything really tricky, sticky, difficult, any underworld places within ourselves, we're most likely doing ancestor work very closely with ancestors who have lived or left a legacy that has not been the best. Because we're here to shift and change that with our own life and our own way of continually making amends and living our lives differently. So I really hope that helps. And once again, I literally have my hand on my heart, just really bowing to what a huge area of topic and discussion this is. And just really with a great deal of humility and transparency, once again acknowledging the intersection of my own identity in unpacking my own practice with y'all, and knowing that I don't speak for everyone, not even close.

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So thank you all for being here with me and for... I really just have a lot of big, warm feelings about us being on this journey of discovery together, not in terms of this podcast but just even with, like, asking these questions. Ashley, thank you for asking this, for being so thoughtful about it. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to be thoughtful in turn. And, yeah, that's what I have for you today.

And this is something that we'll talk about, likely very similarly to what I've just mentioned here, in *Intuition as a Spiral*. So if this calls to you, if this kind of material and this kind of deep work calls to you, it would be wonderful to journey with this with you through this course spiral. We begin on Samhain on October 31st. There's live calls, there's really beautiful, rich pre-recorded material, and we journey together for about five weeks. If you're interested, you can follow the link on the show notes. And if you're not, I'll still be so thankful to connect with you in this space. So until we do connect again, please take sweet care of yourselves.

[Conclusion]

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This podcast was edited by Chase Voorhees, podcast art by Rachelle Sartini Gardener, and this episode was transcribed by one of our absolutely brilliant and beautiful transcriptionists, all of which you can learn more about or read about on our website tarotforthewildsoul.com.

If you wish to dive into more of my work, learn more about Soul Tarot, work with me in any kind of capacity—I'm always creating new things for us to do together. But you can find out all about our self-led courses and classes and new offerings on tarotforthewildsoul.com. And if you want to be the first to know about any new offerings, any new projects that I'm doing, if you want to benefit from discounts and early birds, and all kinds of lovely newsletter-only offerings, you can sign up for the newsletter at the link in our show notes.

And finally, if you have a question for me to answer at the podcast, or if you'd like to work with me live on the podcast, or if you'd like your question answered on the podcast, please click the link to [Ask Lindsay](#) and send me your Qs. Thank you so much for being here.