



# AYA MADRE

## Healing With Love

### Welcome!

Our center emphasizes healing with love; and this love is both feminine and masculine, tempered with compassion, discipline and regulation. The central practice at Aya Madre is our dieta. The deeper we go into our dieta, the more benefit we receive. Going inward, into our own internal meditation with our medicinal plants, is highly encouraged for the most beneficial experience. Aya Madre is a healing center where everyone is treated equally with love. Maestra Estela specializes in treating the root of our suffering and guides us to rediscover and align with our self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence and self-love.

Aya Madre presents a very unique opportunity to have access to, collect and prepare our own medicines; there is no third party between our plants and us. In addition, Maestra Estela's approach is very open-minded and present. She adjusts the healing process based on an individual's needs and unique situation, rather than adhering to a stagnant format.

The Shipibo dieta is a central aspect of the entire Shipibo spiritual system, providing spiritual guides and allies to those who enter into this sacred process in the form of master plant spirits. In many ways, the dieta is more valued for personal growth than even the ingestion of Ayahuasca. For these reasons, the Shipibo dieta--also referred to as simply, the dieta or dieting-- is a required aspect of all guests' retreats and comprises a large amount of the healing Maestra Estela provides. It can at times be difficult, but the majority of guests after committing to its process find enormous spiritual and personal growth.

The Shipibo dieta is about the ingestion of master plants such as Piñon Colorado, Renaco, Sanango, Mapacho, Shiringa, etc., and not directly related to Ayahuasca ceremonies, or even food. Rather, individuals in the Shipibo culture electing to undertake a dieta, just like all guests who come to Aya Madre, **voluntarily choose to enter into an ascetic time of their life, abstaining from indulgences of taste, pleasure, and entertainment in order to devote all**

**their energy to connecting with the spirits of the plants.** This process is similar to other spiritual traditions such as fasting or extended meditation. Dieters enter into a process of clearing the mind and body of any harmful energy and make space for the highly beneficial qualities that the master plants provide, such as Piñon Colorado's access to lucid dreaming, Renaco's physical strength, or Abuta's ability to heal infections.

The process of self-purification by dieta (introspection and meditation with the plants) is certainly never easy--students have to work very hard at it. By their own efforts, students arrive at their own realizations; no one else can do this for them. Therefore, the dieta will suit only those willing to work seriously and observe the discipline, which is there for the benefit and protection of the guests and is an integral part of the dieta practice.

Coming to Aya Madre means embarking on a healing journey that includes learning, connection and deep transformation. Maestra Estela takes it as a point of honor to be part of her guests' journey; to help them understand this tradition, and to be a figure of support, care and learning. Not only is she a curandera and shaman, but also a teacher, guide and mother. Maestra Estela encourages guests to connect to nature, to her family and traditions, and to oneself, as an essential part of her approach to healing – and this healing is accomplished with love.

**The center welcomes the curious and adventurous, but only those who feel that they can honestly and scrupulously follow the discipline should invest their time and energy here.** Those not prepared to make a determined effort will disturb others who wish to work seriously. A guest should also understand that it would be both disadvantageous and inadvisable to leave without finishing their course of medicine upon finding the discipline too difficult. Likewise, it would be most unfortunate if, in spite of repeated reminders, a guest does not follow the rules and has to be asked to leave. However, it is a top priority to keep harmony, peace and safety at the center.

At Aya Madre, you will be confronted with your true self – both dark and light. Do not be intimidated or afraid, for it is you: you own it and you can heal it. Often we begin our time here by regressing into past wounds, childhood traumas and childlike dependence. Be aware of this, as it is a crucial part of the healing process for many. However, we do not dwell there. We dialogue with our plants and we heal ourselves, reclaiming our unburdened and healthy adult personality in the process.

The most successful dieta is one in which we eventually enter silent meditation with our plants. Silence means silence of body, speech, and mind. Any form of communication with fellow guests, whether by gestures, sign language, written notes, etc., would be counterproductive. **Communication with Maestra Estela for guidance, and staff members for any needs is absolutely and always available.** Guests may speak with Maestra whenever necessary and they may approach the staff with any problems related to food, accommodation, health, etc. But even these contacts should be kept to a minimum. Students should cultivate the feeling that they are working in isolation: in a meditation of self-care and self-love.

It is only by taking a disciplined approach and by making maximum effort that a student can fully grasp the practice and benefit from it. The emphasis during the dieta is on personal healing and growth. Guests who are willing to listen and comply fully and for the duration of their stay with Maestra Estela's guidance and instructions; **that is, to observe the discipline of the dieta, without ignoring any part of the instructions, nor adding anything to them,** will benefit the most from their time here. Only with an attitude of trust, and faith in oneself and the medicine, can a student work diligently and thoroughly. Such confidence in Maestra, the plants and the technique is essential for success in the dieta.

Above all, it is important to understand and accept that the Shipibo dieta is a highly sacred form of healing, which Maestra Estela has worked with for decades and values dearly. It may be that a student cannot understand the practical reasons for one or several of the above guidelines. Rather than allow negativity and doubt to develop, immediate clarification should be sought with Maestra.

It is crucial to keep in mind that you are part of a sacred community. **Take great care that your actions do not disturb anyone. Take no notice of distractions caused by others, and take good care of yourself.**

Please also be mindful that we live, work, and heal here. We also are on dieta, very open and sensitive to energy, and we need downtime, space and quiet.

May the above information help you to obtain maximum benefit from your time with us. We are happy to have the opportunity to serve, and wish you peace, happiness, healing and light from experience here.

## **For best results, follow this advice as closely as possible:**

- \* Rise early in the morning and meditate silently in your tambo.
- \* Prepare and take your prescribed dieta medicines.
- \* On non-ceremony days, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, breakfast will be ready as early as 8-8:30 am. All meals are self-serve and are available all day until 7pm.
- \* After breakfast, retreat to your tambo for a day of meditation with your plants. Lunch, dinner, journaling, nature walks, quietly singing & playing instruments, this is how we invest our time here on dieta.
- \* On Ceremony days, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, we rise and meditate and may or may not take our dieta medicines before we begin ceremony at 9am.
- \* Ceremonies usually last from 9am until 1-2pm on average, depending on the needs of the group.
- \* After ceremonies, we are encouraged to shower, swim in the river, eat lunch, meditate in the maloca (ceremony house), the medicine house, or in our own tambos.
- \* Taking rest by 9pm as a general goal enables us to rise early.
- \* Eat what you can digest, stay hydrated, and practice some light stretching or yoga to maintain good health.
- \* It is possible that you will find someone at the center, or several other people with whom you click, or get along with naturally. This is wonderful. Make sure that the time you do spend together is mutually empowering. Try your best to keep your conversations in the present. Discuss your ceremony experiences, your connection with the plants, your realizations from time at the center; **avoid** politics, current events, gossip and other energy draining topics.

## **Guidelines for Meditation**

For meditation, as in during ceremonies, one can turn his own mind inward, and work as if one were alone, ignoring any inconvenience and distractions that one may encounter. This method, simple and sublime, can strengthen the connection with the 4 medicines one works with at Aya Madre: Luz Divina (Divine Light), Madre de la Selva (Mother of the Jungle), Pacha Mama (Mother Earth), & Plantas de la Dieta (the plants of one's own dieta).

We try to keep the body as relaxed as possible by breathing deeply and naturally, and readjusting position if necessary. Meditation is here to help calm the mind, extend our awareness to the body, develop a lasting connection with the medicines, and provides great assistance for the time spent in ceremonies by training stability of focus, strengthening our connection to the plants and boosting the healing process. It also comes to support us as guests through the effort put in the discipline.

While we can carry on with meditation at any moment of the day, it takes practice to maintain calmness while engaging in other activities. It is therefore recommended to start by sitting down inside the Medicine house, Maloca, our even better in your tambo. The best position is sitting down on the floor, with the legs crossed, back straight, and eyes closed. One can also meditate sitting on a chair or lying down (with a risk of falling asleep :). One can choose to keep the posture sober, directly on the floor, or on a mat / pillow / blanket, or get more comfortable by supporting back, neck, and legs with a wall and extra pillows.

The point is to address attention to each part of the body one by one to develop the perception of our full being, in order to continuously connect as deep as possible with the 4 medicines.

There is no recommended duration for the practice of meditation. It can be a challenge at first, and we rather encourage a daily commitment to try and participate even just a few minutes, as long as one finds space through which one can connect with the 4 medicines, the plants that one is dieting, food that is ingested, and the nature surrounding us. Meditation will assist you while you observe a different pace establishing in your routine, can catalyze the contemplation of your own process here, and help you maintain connection between ceremonies.

## Ceremony Etiquette

Maestra Estela is an expert at attending to each individual in her care, in a very loving and personal way. She has decades of experience in healing and holding sacred space for others, and she sees the safety and wellbeing of her patients as her top priority. In addition, Maestra Estela is extremely generous with her time and in the sharing of her culture and the practice of her medicine. At Aya Madre, we are both patients and students of the medicine, and above all adds Maestra, we are family.

Ceremonies are held Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in our ceremony house known as a maloca. In the maloca, a large round structure for ceremonial space, we sit or lay down on our mattresses facing inwards towards Maestra Estela.

During ceremony, we observe the following practices:

- We remain in our own space both physically and mentally/emotionally. We are at Aya Madre for our own healing and growth, and thus we do not look at, talk to or think of any one other than ourselves, our plant dieta and Maestra and her icaros.
- We do not talk during ceremony
- We are always welcome to use the restroom, but otherwise we remain inside the protected space of the maloca until Maestra has announced the close of ceremony
- Both in and out of ceremony, we do not make physical contact with others. This keeps us all energetically safe.

Before ceremony, we are encouraged to spend our morning in meditation and in dialogue with our plant medicines. When we arrive for ceremony, we bring with us comfortable clothing, a water bottle, and mapacho (which is also always available in the maloca) if we so desire.

We come prepared with our intention, which we set for that day's ceremony. We may be focused on mental, emotional, physical or spiritual healing, and we ask the divine light, mother earth, the mother of the jungle and our diet of plants to focus us, clean us, protect us, guide us and teach us how to best participate in our healing. We ask the medicine, whether it is Ayahuasca,

Shamburi, Huachuma or Mushrooms to connect us with their medicine and the medicine of our dieta. Maestra Estela also sets an intention for all of us individually and collectively for each ceremony.

Maestra will then open the ceremony with some advice for us, she will administer our medicine, and she will then sing icaros to prepare the healing space, to connect us all to the medicines, and to petition on our behalf the benediction of a safe and powerful curative experience. We then are called one by one to receive our individual icaro. We often have more than one master medicine in ceremony, and all participants benefit from the strengths of these medicines and from all of the icaros sung during our time together. Ceremony generally lasts from 9am to 1 or 2pm depending on the size of the group.

There will always be bilingual staff participating in the ceremony, and they are available for any needs that may arise.

It is common to vomit on occasion during one's initial cleansing ceremonies; this will gradually cease as we are cleansed and strengthened by Maestra's medicine and we then move into the learning phase. We are provided with basins for our releases of negative energies, memories, traumas and ailments, which we may carry with us when we sit in front of Maestra to receive our individual icaro. The visions or mareación will also gradually become more and more manageable as we enter into dialogue with the plants.

New guests often begin with Shamburi, which provides a wonderful bridge to the Ayahuasca experience in later ceremonies.

Shipibo medicine practice involves a three-way relationship between the curandera (Maestra Estela), the ceremonial medicines and the plant spirits.

Conversations, or group sharing, are held on the days after ceremony so that we can all learn from each other's experiences, hear Maestra Estela's observations and advice, and integrate the wisdom gained from our connection with the plants.

Many guests experience mental, emotional, psychological and spiritual transformation both inside ceremony and throughout their time at Aya Madre. Both Maestra Estela and her staff of volunteers are available to help guide everyone through their healing process.

## Setting Intentions for Ceremony

Participating in a Plant Medicine ceremony is an opportunity for deep healing and personal transformation. There is great potential for healing of the body, mind, and spirit, for revelatory spiritual experiences, and much more. Setting intentions is an important and valuable part of our preparation for ceremony. What follows here are some suggestions on how to get the most out of working with the sacred plants.

Some suggested questions to ask ourselves: What do you seek to learn, to understand? What's 'calling out to you'? How do you feel at the moment? How do you feel about your life? What's difficult for you at the moment? The answers to these questions can be used to create intentions most relevant to you.

Maestra Estela advises us to dialogue with the plants of our dieta, and to ask them, as well as the ceremonial Plant Medicines, Mother Earth, the Mother of the Jungle and the Divine Light to guide us, focus us, clean us and protect us; to help us to let go of that which does not serve us in life, such as our grief, our anger, our anxiety, our trauma and so on. We can ask the Plant Medicines to show us who we truly are, and what is our path in life.

The process of releasing expectations, or doing our best to, is a powerful exercise in letting go of control and the need for 'knowing' and certainty – which also paves the way to deeper healing with the medicine. Maestra Estela encourages us to surrender to the experience, whatever it is, and trusting that the experience is not a mistake. In fact, feelings that surface after a ceremony (not just during) can be very indicative of what's happening within you and your life. Do you feel jealous or resentful about your ceremony? Left out? Angry? Disappointed? How does this reflect in your life?

Above all Maestra instructs us to have confidence and faith in the medicine, in her and in ourselves.



## **Ego Dissolution ‘Ego Death’**

Maestra Estela describes the ego as a rather small thing. When we refer to ‘ego death,’ it is not that the Plant Medicines “kill it,” but rather they show us the components of our psyche: The boundaries of both the neurotic and healthy ego, the relationship of the shadow and the persona, our inner judge, our inner child, the inner masculine and feminine, and so on, and our larger self beyond it.

Plant Medicine ceremonies often produce what are commonly known as near-death experiences, feelings of leaving the body, transcending the body and entering other realms, and ‘ego dissolution’ and ‘ego-death’ events. People report incredible peace or pleasantness, having heightened senses and a feeling of unity with the universe and experiencing other dimensions, feelings of gratitude for others in one’s life, feelings of love and connection, and experiences of compassion for the human race and increasing solidarity with them, as well as the healing of trauma, insight, and the inspiration and means to change habits.

The ego is our perceived identity, and our state of emotional, psychological and spiritual evolution it has acquired in its journey. The ego is the actor, and shifts in its role during a Plant Medicine session can be revolutionary. Plant Medicines have the power to re-orient identity, helping people “remember” their mission in life and showing them the power they have to overcome obstacles to create the lives they imagine could be possible.

Whereas psychotherapy focuses on ego defenses and issues stemming from identification with the ego and its journey to wholeness, Plant Medicines can loosen the strict boundaries of self-perception and allow other information and perspectives in, introducing a new dimension of healing. The teachings of Plant Medicines are exquisitely tailored to the life and understanding of each drinker, which can result in the common report of experiencing years of therapy in a single ceremony.

The action of Plant Medicines, reveal the ego as malleable, able to contract and expand. Contractions can consist of feelings of remorse, darker journeys where one confronts one’s failings and regrets. The expansion of the ego can result in mystical states of all-inclusive awareness, love and humility. Changes to the ego can also result in changes to identity, giving glimpses of a real self that is a beautiful light full of compassion. That light may be interpreted in a number of ways, but its underlying power is to heal the body and mind.