

A Short Guide to Lighting a Candle

By
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Light a candle in your heart for those you love

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Dedicated to candle lovers everywhere!

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The Story at the heart of this Short Guide:

It is May 13, 2007. The phone rings on Sunday morning. It is my brother. He tells me two police officers were just at his door. Dad has died in a sudden accident at a hotel pool.....I am speechless. The silence crackles. I am in shock. I try to ask questions. There aren't many answers. I don't really know how to navigate this. I have talked to dad just days before, for his 84th birthday.

Amidst my tears, suddenly the biggest question on my mind is how to tell our daughter, a teenager at the time and the apple of Papa's eye and he hers. She is upstairs in her bedroom.

I call her and my husband and recount what happened. I tell her go get 'Alice' your friend and we'll light a rainbow candle for Papa. Off she goes. I go downstairs and get the tallest one, a stand and some beautiful rainbow silk and came back upstairs. By this time 'Alice' and her mother arrive. We sit on the floor in a circle around the candle. We light it carefully and then spontaneously hold hands, in silence. I breathe papa's full name aloud, and say 'It's important for us to be in our hearts right now with papa. Sharing memories of some stories and memories and feelings that mean something to you right now, here in the light of this candle that holds us all right now'.

The candle really glows. Warming this place of a new way of meaning and speaking of papa.

Each of us has something. Laughter, gratefulness, seemingly silly things about his favourite ice cream, yet now a difference. After another silence some sadness for unfinished things and then a pivot as we connect in our hearts with what lives within our hearts.

And the candle keeps glowing. That's what I remember now.

What begins as a simple act of lighting a candle is now holding us together in these first moments of not knowing. Being able to personally share what papa means to us in these early moments seems just right. I didn't know it would be a gift forever!

At a certain moment there is another silence, a sense of silent awe. And it is enough for now.

Just a simple presence in our hearts together, with papa, sending him our love. The glow of the candle enabling us to be together in this moment.

We leave the candle burning all day. It's soft light is incredibly comforting. Even when our attention turns to difficult details and decisions to be made. A precious loving – a candlelight moment.

Later we courageously take this candle and what it means for us to his friends and neighbours gathering at his vigil in his hometown.

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Introduction & Overview

Lighting a candle is an act of love!

This *Short Guide* presents an imagination of the potential of lighting a candle from the 'inside, out'. The outer process of lighting a candle is really the result of paying attention to an initial inner 'spark' in our heart.

A spontaneous hunch to light papa's candle! Years later, the flicker of that candle flame, still holds me with its soft glow.

Lighting a candle takes some effort to find one, plus a stand and a lighter. It is an intention to pause in one's life. It's very much like stopping to smell the roses as we pass by. We are so busy. We often say or imagine what we would like to do. Yet never actually do it.

What I realize anew is that candles don't light themselves! Not even the virtual ones online or the flameless ones! We still need to listen within and find our 'will' to actually go and do it. It is always up to us even if others say we "should".

Here are some assumptions I made in writing this *Short Guide*:

- You like (love) lighting candles and are interested in beeswax candles,
- The word "community" means both our inner relationship with the Divine as well as with others around us, and Earth herself – encompassing both 'visible and invisible' relationships. We really are connected to everything in the world through our heart and the whole world is in our hearts.
- You are open to expanding meditation in your spiritual practice. See *Step #5. 'Connecting in Silence'*
- You know you can contact me about anything in this booklet as well as for any candle care tips (email Linda: lsnagel@hotmail.com)

The '*Six Steps*' to lighting a candle are based on what I have gleaned from designing, rolling and lighting many candles over 18+ years plus a short stint of keeping honey bees for 16 months. I hope the steps resonate for you too. Here they are:

1. Listening in the heart;
2. Choosing beeswax;
3. Preparing for events;
4. Lighting up!
5. Connecting in Silence (A heart meditation practice);
6. Extinguishing the flame, not the heart.

Then I realized that there is a Seventh Step! We can't live meaningful lives or light a candle, or accomplish anything without this! Without this step this short guide could not possibly have been written.

Lighting a candle is an act of love!

The Six Steps

1) Listening in the Heart: *Your decision to light a candle. Intuition and intention. Spontaneously now or planned for months?*

Do you have a gut instinct there is something spontaneously you want to pay attention to?

- Something you must do right now for someone. Difficult news? An accident?

- Something in your own life...a confusion, a block or resistance that requires attention, a conflict with someone, an accomplishment, gratitude, reverence?
- A sudden memory of a loved one?

Or perhaps you intentionally want to mark:

- Special days –Life Moments such as births, leave-takings, anniversaries, deaths, death days of loved ones
- Events – global tragedy, accident, storm
- Seasonal festivals, holy days
- Earth Days – solstice, equinox, cross quarter days
- Planetary events

Listening to what arises in our heart is the key, whether in the moment, or planning for a future ceremony or ritual.

Our decision to light a candle helps us pay attention to whatever we 'hear' in our heart.

Just like my decision to light a candle and gather family around it to be together when we first learned of papa's sudden death. I didn't know exactly what we needed or what would happen. Yet I knew the beeswax candlelight would hold us all, no matter how difficult. There would be space in the heart instead of panic and fear.

Whether we heed our inner intuition or not, is a personal decision. It is always up to us even if others say we 'should' or 'should not'. See the Seventh Step!

Whatever brings us to actually light a candle means something is important. The lighting is an intention to connect – with something that matters to us and is beyond us at the same time – the Divine. We enter this place of potentiality, both a giving and receiving at the same moment. A reciprocity.

Lighting a candle signals our intention

2) Choosing Beeswax:

What kind of candle?

From very early times, initially mostly out of necessity, humans have been attracted to making light. Here is a short history of candles over the past 5,000 years:

Ancient:

Historically, the first torches in ancient Egypt were very smoky and were wickless.

In 3000 BC Egyptians were credited for first true candle made of beeswax with a plant-based wick. The ancient Romans then dipped rolled papyrus in tallow or beeswax. The Chinese rolled rice paper and wax from an indigenous insect and combined that with seeds. The Japanese boiled wax from tree nuts. The people of India boiled fruit of the cinnamon tree. People of Tibet made candles from yak butter. As early as 165 BC, dipped Hanukah candles were used in Jewish ceremonies.

Middle Ages:

Middle Ages saw reliance on tallow (rendered animal fat) candles. Then, beeswax candles were introduced. Yet beeswax was associated with churches and the wealthy. It was a pleasant smell compared to tallow candles and burned pure and cleanly without a smoky flame. 'Chandlers' went house to house making candles from animal fat or sold them in small shops. Candle Making Guilds were developed – one each for tallow and beeswax masters – eventually several towns banned tallow candles due to excess smoke. Eventually candle making passed largely to homemakers well into 1700s, after these Guilds died out.

Modern:

In colonial times in North America, wax from bayberries was cooked in large vats. Bayberry candles are still made by specialist candle makers today. Then a new type of candle was made from crystallized sperm whale oil (from spermaceti – the sperm whale -) creating more reliable candles. The 'candlepower' standard was created using these candles. A unit of 'candlepower' measured the amount of light from its source.

In 1850s refined petroleum produced paraffin candles, which are still used today.

In 1980s scented candles became popular.

In 1990s soybean wax (softer and slower burning than paraffin) were introduced. So were palm wax candles. Gel candles were introduced, which are not wax at all.

In 2000s flameless electric or battery candles gained in popularity also.

Notable Inventions affecting candle production:

These are some mechanical inventions that increase sales of all kinds of candles, especially now in modern times. Stearin wax developed in 1820s enabled an easier mould release and was also added to wax for longer burning and hardness. In 1824 braided wick was developed. In 1834 a machine was developed to make moulded candles making larger scale productions viable. Then on December 31, 1879 Thomas Edison made the first public demonstration of his incandescent light bulb. It was during this time that he said: "We will make electricity so cheap that only the rich will burn candles."

Nonetheless, candle sales continue to hold their own in the world. Since the 1980s, uses in the home have broadened.¹

Candles are still used to:

- Sooth the senses,
- Define ceremony,
- Symbolize celebration
- Mark romance
- Accent home decors
- Provide emergency light and heat

Lighting a candle is a particular act of love for Earth

Why Beeswax Matters

Certainly beeswax candles are universally accessible than ever before. No longer only for royalty or the wealthy.

It is clear for me that pure beeswax candles bring something unique to any environment, gathering, or event.

So what is it about bees and beeswax that is so unique? For starters:

- Universally, and throughout time, honey bees are considered sacred
- Of all the pollinators, honey bees are the most studied and written about in history. Their communication abilities have been studied by scientists producing Nobel Prize winners.
- Bees are credited for pollinating over one third of the world's fruits and vegetables. Movies, books, photos have certainly increased our familiarity with the needs for secure environments for honey bees.
- Honey bees produce six substances: honey, propolis, pollen, beeswax, royal jelly, bee venom (apitherapy). What other insect or animal does that?
- Honey bees are community oriented, like us
- Beeswax candles give soft delicate natural fragrance, with a clean, hot and long burn time

Honey bees have been with us for millions of years. Yet beekeepers will certainly attest that each hive is unique pulsing with tens of thousands of bees.

Imagine navigating by the sun, the planets and the moon! We have inklings that they move to a 'different drummer'...of something far greater, a harbinger of something deeper than our consciousness so far.

Myths and legends of ancient Persians, India, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans times, and Indigenous peoples all over the world, express a deep reverence and respect for bees.

Why do bees do what they do? Why are they so generous in their giving regardless of who we are or how we put them at risk environmentally?

It can only be a different quality that makes their world go round, so to speak. Although we don't speak their language, intuitively or unconsciously we feel drawn to them. They live by a force that is largely invisible to us. From my brief experience of 16 months with my four hives, I felt the effects of what I can only say is 'love'. The bees just keep on giving and doing what they do, which is as one friend describes it, 'mediating heaven and earth for us and all of humanity over all of time'. This sense of awe opens the door to 'presence', beyond the 'cause and effect' of strict scientific thinking. I felt surrounded by warmth of their presence many times. And I feel it when burning a beeswax candle.

In 1924, Rudolf Steiner, philosopher, scientist, artist, educator, agriculturist spoke about recognizing this love in the beehives in connection with human love. He said:

"That which we experience within ourselves only at a time when our hearts develop love is actually the very same thing that is present as a substance in the entire hive. The whole beehive is permeated with life based on love."²

Beeswax and honey permeated with love! Wow! That could easily attest to why beeswax has been the wax of choice for thousands of years. A mysterious reverence worthy of the gods!

Each hive, each bee permeated by love which in turn infuses every substance the bees create. Love is not a product by itself, it is in everything they make. Lighting a beeswax candle infuses the air around us and in our very hearts!

Lighting a beeswax candle ignites a flame of love.

3) Preparing for events:

Minimally we need

- a candle securely in a stand,
- a lighter,
- a candle snuffer/water for safety
- our heart's intention or intuition

More considerations:

- types, style, height and colours of candles
- group candle making
- the timing,

- the location, including pairing the elements (earth, air, fire, and water)
- the guests,
- the table and covering,
- flowers
- moments for:
 - music,
 - songs,
 - prayers
 - readings
 - movement
 - silence

Remembering our intention/intuition will help greatly in weaving everything together. Start with what you have and ask others to support your intention! If you prefer a beeswax candle and don't have one, ask your friends!

Group candle making: a very meaningful activity enables attendees to participate in the rolling of simple mini beeswax candles (like the size of birthday candles) for either celebratory or memorial events.

Lighting a candle gathers us in community

4) Lighting Up - the moment of signaling 'I am here'. *Awesome moment when candle wick catches the source flame, the new flame grows upward in size and straightens. (the Presence of Flame).*

Lighting a new beeswax candle for the very first time can be breathtaking! Literally! Will the flame catch or not? We somehow watch this process of lighting up with our heart in our mouth, so to speak! Millisecond by millisecond. It can feel quite dramatic.

When the flame actually catches we feel a connection has occurred beyond the flame itself. We hold our breath, often unconsciously. Somehow now our impulse or intention in our heart is alight!

We are now 'here' instead of being scattered everywhere.

I have always thought candle lighting is a special mindful activity. As in "mind full". We love candles because we need a respite from our mind running our lives! Yet perhaps what we are also seeking is a place where we can listen to our heart, so that our mind knows its rightful place of co-operation, not domination!

When we light a beeswax candle we know either consciously or unconsciously that lighting the candle will help us. We don't really know the outcome. This is exactly what

happened when I lit our candle for papa. The candlelight has lasted far beyond the event itself.

It is a leap of being and knowing in love. Potent.

Lighting a candle is a leap of longing to be met in our heart.

5) Connecting in Silence: *Intentionally connecting in our hearts.*

How can we strengthen our intention to connect with this longing in our heart? We can do this when we are present in the Silence that is all around us and within us at the same time.

This quality of Silence reminds me of my some of my experiences of beekeeping! When I was totally present with honey bees, I was present with them and with my 'higher I' at the same time. Not the ego that seems to command my thinking most of the time. I had learned from other beekeepers early on, when approaching beehives, to let go of all the things on my mind – like appointments later in the day, what I was going say to someone or eat later. Approaching the beehive invited a focus on my intentions of working with the bees in that moment, being in their space. Nothing of my future or the past. Only being 'present' with them. As I look back now, I see beekeeping itself is a practice of letting go of fear and 'what ifs' and learning a way of being within one's heart, heart of Earth and the universe and with bees all at the same time. If you have been totally surrounded by honey bees and not afraid, then you will recognize this practice of being present in your heart.

I wanted to share a specific heart practice, I learned from Robert and Cheryl Sardello in their School for Spiritual Psychology. It is shared with their kind permission.³ See their website: www.heartfulsoul.com

Here is the Silence of the Heart Meditation: http://candlesconnectinghearts.websitehabitat.com/?page_id=904&preview=true

I wrote the following as a poetic picturing of our heart's longing:

*Silence at the heart of Everything. Silence is. Heart is.
Great Silence within and beyond the surround of Earth
And permeating our very body.
We enter Silence of the heart
Bearing all things.*

*Spoken and unspoken within Presence herself.
Warmth of Presence
Kindling our inner flame of Love.*

One can do this heart practice individually and also in groups. You don't need any previous experience to do this particular practice. At the same time it is very meaningful in its simplicity and inclusivity. This heart meditation can be done with or without a candle! I do both. This practice is the way I know to be in my heart and connected with the heart of the world. [Click here for a written description.](#)

Possibilities:

- We can bring the Earth herself as well as individuals we know into this Silence of the heart
- Individuals and groups of people can do this Silence of the heart practice together at any time or place
- Doing this meditation in our hearts with loved ones no longer here is very helpful

Lighting a candle helps us connect with Silence in the heart

6) Extinguishing the flame, not our heart:

Beeswax has a powerful capacity for love. We know when our hearts are full, we know we are within love.

When we know this love deep down inside ourselves we know we can return any time... or in any place. When we are full inwardly, we can blow the flame out and carry love in our hearts.

Here is a practical tip to blowing out a candle if you don't have a snuffer:

Hold your pointer finger in front of the candle flame and blow steadily onto your finger. The flow of your breath will encircle the flame and will extinguish it, leaving no wax residue on the table covering.

Lighting a candle means it must go 'out' into the world

The Seventh Step

Bee-ing our Doing!

This play on words 'bee' and the verb 'to be' is becoming more than accidental or cute. I realize that this synchronicity actually reminds me of a new understanding of activating love and wisdom together in my life. It is no longer enough to be 'wise' in our world (as with the idea of writing this guide).

Looking back, I realize I have lived and breathed variations of these Six Steps to lighting a candle, over two decades! However in order to actually write this booklet and send it out in the world required something more.

Boldly, I offer this *Short Guide* as a conscious way into **living** the connecting of love and wisdom we want so much to see in the world. That bees invite us to be and do together – not as separate actions- shows up when we recognize bees mediate heaven and earth for us all. From them, I know that this 'being our doing' starts with paying attention to love in our hearts. We scarcely know as humanity how to do this. Yet now modern times are clearly calling to us to listen in the heart. How ironic at the very time we are taking steps to do so, that the honey bees are at risk in new ways for their very lives.

A simple act of lighting a beeswax candle can indeed be an act of love.

Lighting a beeswax candle invites a living quality of being our doing!

While I was writing this Short Guide, this Prayer of Love emerged and so I share it here:

O Great Heart,

Where can I go when darkness covers my crying eyes?

What can I speak when words are frozen in my throat?

What can I embrace when my hands and legs are in pain ?

What can I think when I compare and distract myself?

What can I feel when I fear dying times?

What can I do when I don't know what to do ?

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Listen and be the love already written in your heart

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Introducing Community Candle Making

Hi, I'm Linda. It's pretty obvious by now that I love bees, beeswax and inspiring us to light beeswax candles for someone we love.

I know what it is to feel uprooted, feeling life turned upside down right from when I was born. I am coming to know what it is to choose or not choose to live the love in my heart, or freely sit with my 'enemies'. I am learning to hold a new and exquisite connection, touching this place that flames with the wholeness of visible and invisible worlds here on Earth, this inviolable Love that nourishes us and feeds the courage of our own heart.

It's my hope that together you and I can build community in making and lighting hand rolled beeswax candles for loved ones –especially for Life's Moments for dying times and Remembering those who have passed before us.

We can light candles when our hearts feel stretched beyond belief through life's circumstances. Yes! There is a candle for that!

Let's Stay Connected: I would love to know what kind of community candle making you are inspired to do after reading this booklet. What have you observed about lighting candles in community already? This is the first iteration of my booklet. If you have suggestions or comments, do please be in touch!

Contact me and let's talk!

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I am available to make custom candles for you, your community as well as engage communities in making candles to express their love for loved ones. I do speaking engagements, workshops at conferences, write blog posts, as well as make a variety of beeswax candles to ship pretty well anywhere. How can I help you?

Light a candle in your heart for someone you love!

References Mentioned:

¹ Appreciation for research of (US) National Candle Association

² Bees; lectures by Rudolf Steiner. Translated by Thomas Braatz. New York, Anthroposophic Press, 1998 (originally published in German 1966) p. 2-3. A slightly different online translation can be found here: <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA351/English/SGP1975/19230203p01.html>

³ This particular heart practice is shared with kind permission of Robert & Cheryl Sardello – please see their website for descriptions of their Center of Heartfulness: www.heartfulsoul.com