

O. *The Fool*

How to Embrace Major Life Changes with Courage, Curiosity, Wonder, and Trust

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Hello Tarot Adventurers,

Ready to go on a transformational journey? Well, then, meet the Fool. He is the perfect companion and guide to accompany you. . . .

There come moments in each of our lives when we are being called to grow beyond our current self on our evolutionary path to express our highest human potential.

When these major life transitions arrive—whether relative to a significant relationship, career, spiritual path, finances, health, physical location, etc.—they often carry a mixture of excitement and fear, for they call us away from familiar patterns, beliefs, and lifestyle choices and into the unknown, which may have none of these for the foreseeable future.

On the one hand, we feel the life-force energy pulsing through us again, invigorating our sense of expanded possibilities for ourselves and our lives.



On the other, we may feel fearful of our ability to trust the impulse for change and to successfully navigate new territory. Depending on the strength of our inner conviction, we may find ourselves pulled to stay with what feels safe and comfortable, even if it is not as vital and fulfilling as it once was.

What attitudes and behavior choices will best serve us as we try to figure out what to do about the major life changes that are beckoning? Do we stay with “same old, same old,” or do we heed Life’s call to grow beyond our current “box” and make a leap of faith into the unknown? How do we decide? Here is where the Fool can come to our aid.

Qualities of the Fool

The Fool (O), the first card of the 22 Major Arcana archetypes, is known for the qualities of courage, adventurousness, innocence, wonder, openheartedness, idealism, trust, creativity, freedom, and independence. He is nonjudgmental, is true to his own inner guidance, and has a propensity for exploring the unknown and taking risks.

He has much wisdom to share with us about how to approach major life transitions. To begin, here are some clarifying questions he might ask you:

- How does the idea of a new beginning fit into your life right now?
- What expanded possibilities are you being guided/invited/nudged to consider?
- What risks are you being called to take that are aligned with your heart’s desire?
- What do you want to do with your life in the years to come?
- What unfilled dreams and desires exist in you?
- What direction/focus brings you joy to consider and perhaps also a little fear?

Self-examination is important when you are facing life-changing decisions. In answering these questions, be sure to remember that while the rational mind might be an expert at presenting pros and cons, it is critical to pay attention to the innate wisdom and guidance of your heart, spirit, and body as well.

Symbolism of the Fool Card

The energy of this card is one of bursting upon the scene, the first step forward, a leap of consciousness. In more traditional decks, the Fool is pictured at the edge of a cliff, symbolically standing on the brink of a new experience. His possessions are tied in a bundle on a stick he carries over his shoulder, and a dog is nipping at his heels.

In the Thoth deck, which has much more complex symbolism, he is striding forward with a focused gaze, an umbilical cord wrapped around him in four spirals. Various symbolic images are scattered throughout the card. Gerd Zigler, in *Tarot: Mirror of the Soul*, gives a general overview:

The long umbilical cord, connection to cosmic oneness, wraps the Fool in four spirals. The possibility of rebirth is given on all four planes of human existence: spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical. The prerequisite is your readiness to change in all areas; your responsibility to self-development. [p. 13]

Each spiral contains symbols, which we will touch on only briefly here:

- 1st spiral: cord is heart shaped (emotional rebirth)
- 2nd spiral: dove (vulnerability and sensitivity); butterfly (transformation); snakes (healing and health)
- 3rd spiral: intertwined children (relationships)
- 4th spiral: crocodile (creative powers); tiger (fear)

Though the tiger is biting his leg, the Fool is not distracted. He trusts that when he steps off the cliff, he will not be smashed to smithereens at the bottom of the canyon, but rather he will be lifted up on the wings of Spirit to pursue his path. He trusts his inner wisdom, which has guided him faithfully to this point.

New Cycle

The Fool represents the beginning of a new cycle in a person's life. On the Tree of Life of the Kabbalah, he connects Keter (pure Spirit, absolute will) and Chochmah

(wisdom). (See the *Tree of Life* diagram in the blog post listings.) His natural home is the realm of Oneness, of all possibilities. He leaves this to set out on a quest to explore his next level of personal evolution.

Another way to think about it is that Spirit (our Higher Self, Universal Intelligence, Source, etc.) is about to begin another adventure in search of experience in time and space—the realm of manifestation.

This is a card of spring—the Fool is ever young, ever reborn. He is said to have the “heart of a child and the will of a warrior.” He has purity of feelings and motive; he is innocent, emptied of attachments, preconceived attitudes or judgments, or a personal agenda.

He is wide open to the unusual, with no fixed idea of what should be. There are no limitations here—anything is possible! He is infinitely curious, knowing that each event, each set of circumstances, holds within it the opportunity to learn and evolve toward more authentic self-expression.

He refuses to live by fixed social standards of behavior; he is often ostracized by society but is the instrument that will transform it. He is the cosmic joker who sees *all* life experiences as full of wonder, whether familiar or new. He delights in meeting the Divine in all forms.

When You Get This Card in a Reading

If the Fool card shows up in a reading, we are being encouraged to make a spontaneous move forward into the future without fear. We need to trust all to the Divine within: “The fool rushes in where angels [or ‘wise men’] fear to tread.”

The Fool is able to do this because he knows that *all* is Spirit—both the known and the unknown, all that is manifest and all that is unmanifest. There is no place where Spirit is not. Thus, we are never alone on our path, though it may sometimes feel that way.

In summary, his essential message is that each one of us must follow our own unique path and unique aspiration—we are here *on purpose* and *with a purpose* only we can fulfill. We can trust the flow of our personal evolution.

The truth is, we are infinitely becoming that which we already are; the potential is inherent in us or we would not be seeking it. We have to awaken and unlock the full expression of our true, authentic nature. Periodically, on the evolutionary path, we have to step off the cliff and go for it!

So, if the Fool speaks to you and waves you out past your comfort zone, make an intentional decision to say “Yes” to the call. Bring with you the tools of courage, consciousness, creativity, openheartedness, trust, wonder, and curiosity. You can be assured that you will grow from the experience and that you will attract good into your life.

A Full-Blown Fool Experience

Sometimes major change comes only to an aspect or two of our life a certain point, and other times it hits almost everything we hold dear at once! Remember at the beginning of this piece when I mentioned some of the major life-transition categories—relationships, career, spiritual path, finances, health, and physical location? When several of these are involved, that’s what I call a “full-blown Fool experience.”

Our daughter has given me permission to briefly share her “Fool” story, which falls into this latter category. At 28, having been out of college for six years and having experienced some serious challenges as well as life-enhancing experiences during those years, she felt the call to expand her world and her skills, and to do something where she is making a more meaningful contribution to others.

For her, this meant applying to graduate schools at an older age than most aspiring graduate students. This required a significant investment of money for applications and to purchase a Graduate Record Exam preparation program, which necessitated extensive study to do well on it.

Once in the throes of the application process itself, there was the pressure to do well in interviews, both to be accepted into a good school and then to be placed in an internship program, which is part of her school curriculum. Steadily and patiently, through periodic starts and stops, uncertainties, and frustrations, she forged ahead through the many details.

Her intuition led her toward selecting a school on the East Coast, which would take her far away from family, friends, and almost all that had been familiar in her life, having been raised in New Mexico and having attended an undergrad college in California. This courageous choice evoked some initial concerns by “well-meaning others,” which she had to evaluate in herself:

- “It’s too far away—you won’t know anyone and you’ll be lonely.”
- “How will you ever pay for five years of graduate school? You’ll be in debt forever.”
- “The weather can be brutal in Boston—both in summer and winter! You won’t be happy there.”
- “The area is too expensive—how will you be able to afford the rent?”
- “You’re doing well. Why don’t you just stay where you are and continue working and making good money?” (Her employer offered her a managerial position and more money to stay for another year before going off to school.)

Through this process, she has held to her vision and continued to trust her inner knowing that this is the right program, the right timing, and the right environment for her at this stage of her life. And with that attitude and commitment to her goals, more and more pieces have been falling into place, including finding a charming, safe, and affordable place to live.

So now, at 29, she is scheduled to move east this summer to begin her new life. Like the Fool, she is looking upon this time of major change as an adventure and an opportunity to pursue her dreams. The entire process has reinforced that she has the ability to overcome obstacles and persevere in challenging situations. She is trusting her inner guidance that “it will all work out” and is confident that she doesn’t have to know in advance what the exact details of that will look like.

We are in awe of her courage, determination, and willingness to follow her unique path, and no one else's. I'm sure the Fool is applauding along with us.

Symbolic Correspondences

For those who are interested in the Fool's correspondences in other mystical systems, as represented in the Thoth deck, here are a few that are useful:

- Astrology: Uranus (sudden, unexpected change, freedom)
- Hebrew letter: Aleph ("ox")
- Tree of Life: Path 11, connecting Keter (pure Spirit, absolute will, all possibilities) and Chochmah (wisdom)
- Element: air
- Greek mythology: Dionysus, the Greek god of spring

Sometimes we understand symbolism more clearly in a system with which we are better acquainted. Though we are not exploring these correspondences in depth here, being aware of them can be useful in broadening your understanding of the energy of the Fool.

Share Your "Fool" Stories

I would love to hear your own "Fool" stories of leaving behind that which was no longer serving you and trusting that to which you were being called, even if your rational mind (and that of others) disagreed. What happened when you did this? Where are you now?

To send an anecdote to me, fill out the "Leave a Reply" information below. Please be sure to indicate whether you give your consent to this being publicly shared on this blog. (This can be done with your first name only if you prefer.)

May the courage, curiosity, wonder, and trust of the Fool guide your footsteps and life choices this week,

Barbara