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Home > Archives > 0910

Features

Moon Phases: Our Celestial Reflections

by Barbara Schiffman, CHT

As you rush around juggling work, family, e-mail and errands, do you ever look up in the sky and gaze at the moon? It's working hard reflecting the sun's light every night of the year.

But unlike most people, the celestial body called Grandmother Moon by Native Americans and "the creator of all things" by African Bambuti pygmies takes a break each month to rest and renew herself. She reminds us that we should rest too.

For centuries, humans have tuned into the moon to honor life's cycles. Farmers use moon phases to pick the best days for planting and harvesting crops. They plant seeds when the moon is new or dark and use its energy while it changes from new to full to improve their plants' quality and quantity. They also harvest crops after a full moon during the cycle's weeks of completion.

Women's fertility cycles often synchronize with new or full moon phases, especially in households with several women of child-bearing age. Groups of female friends who gather to celebrate the new or full moon each month may also find their physical cycles are flowing concurrently, as do many coeds living in dorms.

Cultural Perspectives and Celestial Balance Points

If you're reading this during a full moon week, tune into the beauty of Grandmother Moon. Native Americans believe her job is to remind us of our life cycles which teach us "when enough is enough."

Other cultures consider the moon as the sun's consort. In an Amazonian legend, the sun and moon are lovers, but the sun's hot passion nearly sets the Earth on fire and the moon's tears threaten to flood it. So the sun and moon find a perfect distance from each other to be close but to maintain balance on Earth.

Eclipses, solstices and equinoxes are considered astrological and astronomical balance points of the year. The sun, moon and Earth come into alignment at those times so their collective energy is considered balanced, as it is in the Amazonian legend.

Eclipses are noticeable as the sun's aura radiates around the dark moon as it moves between the Earth and the sun. In some cultures, eclipses were considered magical or dangerous times. In Mark Twain's novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, for example, the Yankee-hero uses the eclipse of the year 528 to convince King Arthur he's a magician.

Solstices and equinoxes are considered sun-moon-earth balance points. The sun and moon get equal time on the equinoxes, while one gets more time than the other on the solstices. These quarterly points also correspond to agricultural cycles and seasonal shifts with spring, summer, autumn and winter officially beginning at the solstices or equinoxes.

The Chinese principle of yin and yang or the balance between male and female energies is also based on a legend of the sun and moon as lovers. The moon-goddess could visit the sun-god once a month but not vice versa. So the moon reflects the sun's light to unite them and is dark or reflective based on its proximity to the sun.

The moon thus serves as a celestial mirror to help the sun do its work. It also marks the separation between day and night. During the day, we directly receive the sun's energy which fuels our activities. At night, the indirect sunlight—or moonlight—calms our



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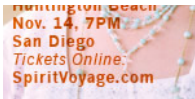
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The Chinese are not the only ones who believe that the moon reflects the feminine yin-principle. The Egyptian moon goddess Isis is considered a healer who wears a headdress with a disc for the full moon framed by two cow horns—or moon slices—for her waxing and waning phases.

In the Arctic, Eskimos believe that the moon is the home of the Lovely and Glorious Lady who oversees our life-sustaining oceans. In New Zealand, the Maori say that the moon goes through a process of death and rebirth as it waxes and “dies,” then bathes in an enchanted lake beyond the clouds where Ka-ne, the water of life, rejuvenates it each month. In India, traditional moon goddesses include Lakshmi, who brings prosperity and abundance, and Kali, who destroys what’s no longer needed and maintains the cycles of time.

Greeks and Romans worshipped a wide range of goddesses to reflect all four moon phases, from Diana or Artemis who hunts under the waxing or waning moons, and Selene, who tunes into the stars during the full moon, to Hecate who infuses the dark or new moon with magic. The Triple Goddess of Maiden, Mother and Crone also represents the moon’s waxing, full and waning phases as the stages of human life from youth to fertility to wisdom.

The Moon’s Phases: New to Full and Back Again

Clearly, the moon has been honored and revered across the world. However, in our always-on cyberworld, we usually ignore the moon’s monthly phases, except when we see the full moon. But this natural energy cycle can help us consciously create balance by tuning into the moon’s powerful rhythms.

Many standard calendars include new, waxing, full and waning moon dates each month. If your calendar doesn’t, visit www.moonconnection.com for a daily moon phase calendar, moon-related info and a shop with moon phase software, calendars and moon posters. An astrological calendar can be found at www.zodiacarts.com showing the moon’s daily zodiac signs.

The moon passes through the full spectrum of astrological signs in 28-1/2 days. While our modern calendars are based on a 30 or 31-day month (except for February), ancient Celtic calendars were based on a 13-moon year. So our calendars have two full moons in the same month at least once a year—usually at the beginning and end of a five-week month. When this occurs, the second full moon is called a blue moon. That’s why we use the phrase “once in a blue moon” to describe rare occurrences in our lives. The phases of the moon serve as a mirror for the phases of our lives. The new moon reminds us to focus inward and take a break on a regular basis. Recharging our energy once a month keeps us in balance while relaxing only once a year barely relieves stress.

The new or dark moon organically reminds us that it’s time to clear our mental/emotional slate. By releasing the past and shifting focus to what’s next, we can create new beginnings every month—not just on New Year’s Eve, your birthday or an anniversary.

As noted earlier, the new moon week is traditionally when farmers plant seeds. So it’s also a good time for us to plant fresh ideas in our minds or envision the first steps needed for creating new projects or relationships.

Astrologically, the new moon is usually in the same zodiac sign as the sun.

Energetically, we get a double dose of that month’s strongest astro-frequency which then permeates the whole month.

I therefore use the new moon week to reset my focus for the coming month and choose actions which resonate with its zodiac vibes. This helps me tune into the full energy spectrum over the course of each year and creates balance by making sure each life-slice, so to speak, gets a bit of positive energy.

Simple Tools for Using Moon Cycles

You don’t need to know what zodiac sign the moon is in to use it to create life balance.

Here’s a simple way to think about the phases of the moon:

New Moon: On the day or evening of the new moon, pause for a few minutes to mentally and emotionally release anything you’re holding onto from the past month. You can do this before going to sleep or just after waking, when your conscious and subconscious minds are naturally in sync.

Just close your eyes and visualize a mental whiteboard. On it, write the things that you accomplished or made noticeable progress on during the past month. Use whatever color markers you prefer—a different one for each item if you wish.

Then take a deep breath before reading the items over. As you read them, appreciate anything and everything you’ve done, no matter how small. Even thinking about something counts, as thoughts are the first step to taking action.

Trust that these items are as complete as they need to be for now, even if there is more to be done. Now erase the mental whiteboard, releasing everything you wrote and cleaning the board for the coming month. This gives you a fresh place to record your accomplishments each month, even if you have an ongoing project or long-term relationship. The moon’s phases remind us how projects and relationships also work in cycles.

The new moon’s energy lasts for seven calendar days as it gradually begins to reflect

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more light again. You can use the new moon week for recharging and also to do research or choose actions for the waxing moon week ahead.

Waxing Moon: Notice how the waxing moon is evolving from a thin crescent to a half-circle. During this phase, add positive energy by taking actions which will lead to results by or soon after the full moon. This first half of the month—between new and full—is when ancient farmers believed the moon super-charged their crops.

Full Moon: Most people think the full moon is the end of the monthly cycle because it's so big and beautiful—but it's actually the midpoint. We see the full moon two weeks after the new moon and have two weeks before the moon goes dark again. This reminds us how our positive actions germinate our inner seeds which bud during the waxing weeks. When results blossom like an opening flower at the full moon, we can see them, even if they're not yet complete. So the full moon is a good time to celebrate your results so far and be grateful for them.

Waning Moon: A week after the full moon, the waning moon reminds us that there's one more week to complete what we're working on before we can create a clean slate again. This lets us handle finishing touches and helps us evaluate what we're ready to release so we don't drag it into the future if it's not useful anymore.

Many of us hang on to everything in our lives—at least in our thoughts and feelings—and carry it with us from month to month. This can be exhausting and stressful. Our energy naturally gets drained if we drag around feelings of regret, unworthiness or inadequacy, as well as the belief that we haven't done enough or moved forward fast enough.

Back to the New Moon: Letting go of negative energies that often settle into our bodies and create stress or disease is a powerful use for the new moon. If you feel like you're always behind or running late, start using the waxing moon's final week of the cycle for completion. Then let go of negative energies at the new moon and start again. If the moon can, we can!

In brief, the new moon gives us new beginnings, waxing (growing) moon helps us add positive energy through action, full moon lets us celebrate our results so far, and waning moon gives us another week for completion before starting fresh again at new moon.

Tuning into the moon's phases is one easy way to create and sustain life balance, no matter where you are or what you're focusing on. It can strengthen your connection to the cosmic-global energy currently evolving as we blend consciousness with action for the benefit of all.

Since Grandmother Moon reflects light upon everyone on Earth, let her be an example of how you can amplify and reflect your own positive energy upon everyone in your life.

Moon-Related Resources

Books:

- *New Moon Astrology* by Jan Spiller: Writing affirmations tuned to the new moon's zodiac energy stimulates release or change and manifests healthy desires. www.janspiller.com has free astrology charts and daily moon phase reports.
- *Secrets of Moon Astrology* by Teresa Moore: Explores personal moon-signs of birth horoscopes and positive actions for each moon phase/sign combo.
- *Moon Time* by Johanna Paungger and Thomas Poppe: Covers moon phases plus suggestions of best moon phases for specific healing treatments.
- *Naturally Powerful* by Valerie Wells: Suggests ways to mentally shine intentions on your goals at full and new moons.

CDs

- *New Moon New Beginnings Meditation Kit*: 12 zodiac-attuned guided meditations and astro-action lists cover a full year for group or solo rituals. www.eclecticdelights.com

*Barbara Schiffman, CHt, is a Life and Soul Coach and Certified Hypnotherapist. A spiritual synthesist who blends astrology, natural elements, tarot archetypes and guided imagery, she helps groups and individuals evolve from the inside out. Get info on her teleclasses, private sessions, and her New Moon*New Beginnings guided meditation CD kit at www.hypnosynergy.com, www.yourlifeandsoul.com or 818.415.3479.*

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