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Living Arts

Astrology's Building Blocks: The Elements and Energy Rhythms

by Barbara Schiffman

"Nearly all of us feel deep affinities and stirrings when we allow ourselves to experience the living earth, or the ever-changing ocean. To feel the soaring wind, or to sit beside a dancing fire, creates a resonance with a part of ourselves which is indeed elemental."

– Bill Whitcomb, in *The Magician's Companion*

As author Bill Whitcomb suggests, we resonate naturally with earth, air, water and fire, the four elements which comprise our tangible world. But you may be drawn to one or two of these elements more than the others when you need to re-center, replenish and recharge your personal energy. Humans contain all four elements as ingredients in our bodies, lives and relationships. But these elements express themselves differently through each of us. If we all liked or did the same things, our world would be a boring place and we would never evolve.

Does the dance of a campfire ignite your inner flame? Maybe standing barefoot in cool grass or planting seeds in rich soil grounds you. Can you see symbolic images in clouds or hear intuitive messages as breezes rustle through trees?

Perhaps you feel most peaceful by the ocean watching the waves ebb and flow. Or you're cleansed and energized by the rush of a flowing waterfall. Maybe relaxing in a hot-tub or bubble bath helps you let go of a challenging day.

While each of these elemental activities can be nurturing, one reason we may respond to particular expressions of these four elements can be found in our astrological birth charts. The four elements resonate with the zodiac signs used for over two centuries as astrology's elemental shorthand of human energy frequencies and relationships.

What I consider the essential building blocks of astrology's energy-language are the four elements, plus three basic energy rhythms (which astrology refers to as qualities): Cardinal (always moving), Fixed (grounded) and Mutable (pendulum motion). Blending one element with one rhythm creates each of the 12 frequencies symbolized by the zodiac signs which were codified centuries ago but still reflect human energy patterns today.

Your Horoscope Is an Elemental Map

Your personal horoscope is a virtual snapshot of how the Earth, Sun, Moon and Stars were vibrating with each other as you took your first breath. Therefore it mirrors how you're uniquely "wired up" in this lifetime. Understanding how the four elements show up in your astrological birth chart can explain why certain things, people and experiences naturally appeal to you. You probably know your Sun Sign even if you don't know the rest of your birth chart. It's the Sun's zodiac sign on the day of your birth which you probably check out in the horoscope columns of magazines, newspapers and websites.



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It can also be useful to find out your Moon and Rising Signs if you don't already know them. Along with your Sun Sign is comprised what I call "The Big Three" influences on your full energy-spectrum. These three signs collectively reflect how you most naturally express your energy in the world (Sun), how you receive energy from others and the world (Moon), and how the world sees you (Rising). They also influence which things, activities and people you resonate with most easily as their element/rhythm blends are complimentary to yours.

The Elements Plus the Energy Rhythms

If you know your Sun Sign, you can begin noticing which of the four elements seems most influential in your life. The element of your Sun Sign can help explain why you prefer swimming (water) to gardening (earth), reading (air) or hiking (fire). Your Moon Sign's element may indicate why you like flowers (water), crystals or jewelry (earth), incense or perfume (air) and/or candles (fire) as gifts. Your Rising Sign's element may suggest why other people see you as knowledgeable (air), busy (fire), highly emotional (water) or stubborn (earth).

These insights can help you determine whether to seek more grounding, movement, flow or inner vision when your energy feels off-balance or drained. Doing something that feeds your primary energy—inspired by the element of your Sun Sign or any of the Big Three—is a good starting point for replenishing your energy or getting re-centered.

In a nutshell, earth metaphorically reflects our material world—from our bodies to the stuff we own to the tangible world around us. This includes the people in our lives (but not how we feel or think about them). Earth energy is grounded, stable and solid. But it can also be slow to change and hard to get moving.

Water reflects our emotions and relationships which constantly change, ebb and flow. How we feel about something or someone today may not be how we feel about it or them tomorrow.

Water is fluid and flexible but has some density (unlike air) so it can be contained. But it also changes frequently like the tides and can be hard to calm down if emotions feel overwhelming.

Air resonates with our mental processes and how we learn things. It is intangible and moves at the speed of thought. Metaphorically, it includes our ability to imagine and envision as well as to analyze. It's separate from but intimately tied to our emotions. In fact, our thoughts influence our feelings and by extension, our bodies in positive or negative ways, as our subconscious doesn't differentiate between what's imagined and what's real.

Fire resonates with illuminating things or issues and activating energy. It also reflects the divine spark in each of us through our spiritual connections. Fire can warm us, but it can also burn. A runaway wildfire will destroy everything in its path but candles and campfires can be contained and their moving flames observed.

Mixing the four elements with the three rhythms gives us 12 different energy patterns. Cardinal rhythm is always moving but can burn out if it doesn't rest now and then. It's useful for launching new projects, ideas and relationships, and getting things moving when they feel stuck.

Fixed rhythm is grounded and stable like the roots of a tree. It can feel stuck but a lot may be happening under the surface before we see results, like germinating seeds. It's useful for sustaining relationships, helping things grow and expand, and seeing projects to fruition.

Mutable rhythm goes back and forth like a pendulum or the cha-cha. It's helpful for reviewing things and filling in gaps before moving ahead to the next step or something brand new. It can feel wishy-washy but it is actually preparation for moving forward.

Zodiac Signs and the Elements

Since each element vibrates with three zodiac signs, one for each rhythm, imagine how they blend together in your Sun, Moon or Rising signs or the Sun signs of people you love, work or play with.

Fire Signs: Aries (Cardinal), Leo (Fixed), Sagittarius (Mutable)

Earth Signs: Taurus (Fixed), Virgo (Mutable), Capricorn (Cardinal)

Air Signs: Gemini (Mutable), Libra (Cardinal), Aquarius (Fixed)

Water Signs: Cancer (Cardinal), Scorpio (Fixed), Pisces (Mutable)

As an example, the easiest blends to envision are the water signs: Pisces is like the ocean whose waves ebb and flow, Cancer is the ever-moving waterfall, Scorpio a hot-tub or deep calm pool. People with these signs prominent in their birth charts may find themselves drawn to these type of water activities.



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If you are drawn to things that light you up, ground you, calm your emotions or stir up your thoughts, refer to the elements in your most influential astrology signs. This can help you consider activities, things or people with elements which balance or nourish yours when you feel drained or off-center. You will live with more grace and ease as you choose activities and people whose energy frequencies match or blend well with yours.

Barbara Schiffman, CHT, is a Life and Soul Coach and a Certified Hypnotherapist. As a spiritual synthesist who blends astrology and tarot archetypes with guided imagery, she helps groups and individuals evolve from the inside out. Get info on hypnotherapy, teleclasses, workshops, books, guided imagery CDs and other resources at www.HypnoSynergy.com or www.YourLifeandSoul.com, or call 818.415.3479

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