

Everyone views the spring as a time of renewal, new growth and the promise of brighter days. It also brings an awareness of what slumbered through the dark winter months. It is often the season when we confront ourselves with what we need to be doing, where we want our year to lead and why we want to go there. Spring is the season of Alchemical Air, and its magickal exercise is *concentration*.

Not to be confused with its schoolbook cousin, magickal concentration doesn't imply cramming, memorization or mental obsession. Because Air is an amalgam of Fire and Water, plus itself, magickal concentration combines awareness with attention and brands that elixir with its unique signature: verbalization. To make that less obscure, an example would be expressing your intent.

Intent initializes in awareness (Fire) and grows through Watery attentiveness to (or focus on) the specific goal. Until intent can be distilled, or concentrated, into a verbal expression it remains obscure. That ability to distill and verbalize is how magickal concentration differs from its schoolbook cousin. It is also how the word became elevated to the realm of the sacred in ancient Western civilizations.

So how is alchemical Air useful to us? Well, for openers you can't cast a spell without it. Nor can you be an effective communicator, regardless of the discipline. Communication without concentration is babble. Usually I avoid political statements but, compare the communication skills of Barack Obama to Donald Trump. The former exemplified magickal concentration.

Here's an exercise in concentration that can be performed anywhere, at anytime. To get a real feel for it though, I suggest that you try it first in a peaceful, natural outdoor space. Gardens work well, as do large public parks, isolated beaches or arboretums. Then, try it as a first thing in the morning ritual.

I love the morning call to prayer in Muslim countries; it centers me and sets the day. There's a story that the priests of Thoth would go down to the Nile at sunrise and laugh, to chase away evil and call in the day. The magickal concentration exercise acts similarly, without either ancient or modern religious implications. It has the added bonus of crystallizing your

thoughts – so it is excellent at ridding your mind of chaos. An uncluttered mind is the ideal state from which to create a spell, a prayer or begin a Mindful day.

This exercise is taken from my article, *Magic in the Elements*, published in *Magical Blend* magazine, in 1984.

Find a quiet place, in nature is ideal, but not required. Sit down and get comfortable. Choose an object in front of you. A rock, a blade of grass, a flower, the bark of a tree, a fish in an aquarium, the sea foam on incoming waves, the patterns in a Persian rug; a pinecone, conch shell, sand dollar, your eyes in a mirror, your favorite jewel in the sunlight – truly whatever catches your attention will work well. Focus on it. Review all of its details. How are those details visually related? Just observe, don't talk to yourself. Instead try listening to what you've focused on.

Breathe; keep exploring the object, and now bring its immediate environment into your awareness. Ask the same questions and sense the answers. Then, when you're ready, bring yourself into that environment. How do you relate to it? Do you relate to it? Again, try not to talk to yourself but allow the answers to come from how you feel in the moment. There is nothing right or wrong here; you're just becoming aware of your role in the dynamic environment around you.

Lastly, again when you feel ready, stand up and verbalize what you've discovered to the airspace. One word is ideal but one sentence won't be terrible. You want to be concise though – no run-ons and no paragraphs. You're after the kernel of your experience – that's concentration. Have fun! Try it on all sorts of things in your life; it's a great clarifier.