

In spiritual alchemy the guiding principle is to arrive at balance, a dynamic balance. Alchemical balance doesn't mean stasis. In living systems balance is subject to ongoing change – both internally and externally. Thus achieving it becomes a dance with the Elements of existence. Frozen balance becomes breathing equilibrium. It's a state of harmony that spiritual alchemists used their most precious metaphor to describe. They called the process: making *Alchemical Gold*.

So how do archaic metaphors relate to us, or have anything to do with our daily lives? The presumption is, if you're striving towards harmony within yourself and your environment then you'll live a happier, healthier, more productive life. It doesn't mean you'll certainly win the lottery; it means you'll lead a life worth living – without regret.

How? By recognizing what drives you; what inspires you; what sets you apart and makes you strive. By developing awareness, you find your Fire.

Then what? Fire needs fuel to burn. What fuels that Fire? Pay attention to what you need – not to pay the rent – to appreciate who you are. Delve deep into the mystery that makes you unique. Discover your gifts; unwrap those gifts; revel in them. If you think you haven't got any (or at least none worth stopping the presses over), then you're not paying attention. I'll elaborate.

There's a marvelous concept amongst the Lakota, and many Native American nations. It teaches that everything and everyone has *medicine*. *Medicine* is that mysterious quality that defines, heals, strengthens and can teach us. It is our most precious possession. When you pay attention you find your medicine, you understand your Water.

Okay, but most of us aren't hermits. So how do we integrate our Fire and Water into the world in which we live? How can we express them outside of our inner selves or physical actions? We develop the ability to communicate: who we are; what we truly believe and what we have to offer our cultures. We learn to do so with clarity, brevity and precision via the magickal exercise of *concentration*. We speak our truth; we express our Air.

Then what? How do we make it real? How do we bring it all down to earth (pardon the pun)? The clearest way for me to explain the process is to use the analogy of cooking. Think of the Elements as ingredients or spices in the cuisine that's your life. Earth is that cuisine, plus the rest of physical existence. By transforming, calibrating and manipulating our Elements is how we affect that cuisine.

Need more inspiration; less anxiety; want a good cleanse; desire to be more compassionate, or feel less like a doormat? Perhaps, to paraphrase Yoda, you just don't know where you're goin' or what you're doin' anymore. There's an Element and an exercise to address them all. Yes, it can get exceptionally complicated. Learning what the Elements are, discovering your Elements and practicing their use takes work to perfect. Learning how and when to fine tune them takes a lifetime. What you get for all your hard work is the ability to live on your own terms, with appreciation, understanding, focus and humility. Humility? Yes, humility before the powerful tools of Alchemy.

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