

# LIVING IN YOUR ELEMENT

Leading Reflexologist and Teacher, Lee Anthony Taylor, gives an overview of the physical, mental and emotional components of the five classical elements, and how this influences our overall health.

Imagine going for a walk in the countryside on a beautiful day. The experience makes you feel relaxed, recharges your batteries and fills your heart with joy. All of this can be explained in terms of the five classical elements.

Since ancient times, the classical elements have been seen as the universal forces upon which life depends and have been used to explain the make-up of the basic building blocks for the natural world.

The concept of four basic elements: earth, air, fire and water dates back thousands of years and was instrumental and influential in philosophy, medicine and science, particularly the subject of alchemy. Sicilian philosopher, Empedocles, was the first to propose four elements, fire, earth, air and water, calling them the four 'roots' while Plato referred to them first as 'elements'.

Aristotle developed the concept and related each of the four elements to two of the four 'sensible' qualities: Fire (hot and dry), Air (hot and wet), Water (cold and wet) and Earth (cold and dry). He also added a fifth element, the quintessence or Ether, as an extra-terrestrial or heavenly substance that the stars were made out of. It is used to describe the vital force which animates the physical world.

So, how does this relate to our work as health practitioners?

Well, put simply, health is the balance of the elements within the person. Each element is essential for life to take place. Take one of these elements away and life could not exist. Since these elements are fundamental for life to occur on our planet, what more powerful tools can be found for describing the nature of life itself? And, as the outer world of the physical elements reflects the inner world of an individual then it is fair to say that the more people live in harmony with nature, the happier and healthier their lives become. This idea is integral to our work as therapists.

Looking at each element in turn, we can see the essential qualities that they bring to our life here on Earth. The earth is seen as the ground beneath our feet from which vegetation grows; while water transports everything, irrigates the soil and enables everything to grow. The air is the atmosphere that we breathe, and fire is the sun in the sky which provides heat, light and energy for all living organisms.

## Earth

The Earth Element is our source of stability. It represents balance and brings about a feeling of stability, peace and harmony. By strengthening the Earth Element, we enhance our resolve and determination to get a job done. In spiritual terms, it is related to the Base Chakra: the anchoring point for ourselves in a physical world.

It is a heavy energy and influences

- The bones, joints and tissues, affecting strength and flexibility.

- Such processes as the formation of stones within the body.
- The wellbeing of the whole physical body so that we can build other energies created from the three other elements.

From a mental/emotional perspective, the Earth Element makes us

- Fastidiousness, disciplined and cautious
- Reliable, practical and punctual.
- Develop the base or foundation that we work from to give us our fundamental value and beliefs.

The best way to strengthen the Earth Element is to be mindful and grateful in your surroundings. This allows us to stay connected with our feet firmly on the ground.

## Water

The Water Element is a huge life force. It has nurturing energies which pull out negativity and make our mind calm and focused. Because it is fluid and adaptable, it dictates your ability to manage any given situation. It is the medium of expression and relationships, the expression of love, sexual attraction and the nurturing of children (including in the womb).

It influences

- The Reproductive organs and the Kidneys
- Sexual secretions
- The Menstrual cycle
- Blood, lymph, bile, urine, CSF, saliva and sweat, since we are 70% water

From the mental/emotional viewpoint:

- A deficiency of Water Element implies that the imagination can swamp the person in inner torment
- An excess of Water Element can make a person ultra-sensitive within a relationship
- Since the Water Element controls emotions, it is important to let feelings flow freely.

The best way to strengthen the good Water Element is, unsurprisingly, through hydration. Also, we need to express our feelings as much as possible to anyone with a listening ear.

## Air

Our body can only survive if we breathe. It is the element that most influences your mind and has the quality of movement, something that is not fixed and solid, but flexible and constantly moving. Air is the balance between fire and water and enables the mind to rise up and be free from the bonds of earth.

It is associated heavily with

- Intellect, reason, logic, thought, speech, language, communication and knowledge
- the lungs, the brain and central nervous system
- White blood cells and the Immune System

From a mental/emotional position, the Air Element has the capacity for

- Seeing the big picture, flexibility, independence and a sense of adventure
- Allowing time to reflect and communicate
- Highlighting the inability to give and take

The best way to work with the Air Element is through diaphragmatic breathing. When in a balanced state, the Air Element encourages inspiration and creativity.

## Fire

Fire is the driving force behind all of life's processes. It is the spark inside that allows us to feel enthusiastic and inspired in what we do. Fire brings a lot of positive energy and power and can heal many diseases and depression. Fire represents our relationship to ourselves and to others. It governs our ability to share love with friends, colleagues, intimate partners, and in fact with the entire human race.

It is strongly related to:

- The Muscular System and the Adrenal Glands
- Red blood cells
- Converting sugar into energy
- The Heart
- Fever and inflammation

Mentally and emotionally, the Fire Element brings about

- Insight, illumination and clear confidence
- A clear sense of purpose
- A zest for life
- If unbalanced it can also result in rage, hatred, greed, envy, and the desire for revenge.

It is very important to connect with the Fire element and keep it balanced. Fire cannot exist or be sustained without air and can be doused by water and smothered by earth. While controlling the breath can regulate the temper and keep the Fire Element in check, it is also vital to live out your passions.

## Ether

The influence of the Ether element is limitless. The fifth element embodies all other four elements and symbolises the psychological and emotional qualities we have to adopt in order to develop our understanding of life.

It is:

- Everything around us and influences the mind and the heart
- The invisible flow of the vital force through the body
- The medium of emotional experience and substance out of which ideas are created
- The consciousness of the individual

It finds its best expression in the sexual act and conception - the marriage of the five elements

Act

- Earth - joining together of two bodies
- Fire - sexual attraction
- Water – the exchange of fluids
- Air- spiritual awareness

## Conception

- Earth - the formation of new body
- Water - entering into mother's emotional state
- Fire – the development of desires, will and motivation
- Air – an unfolding mental awareness and development

By mastering the four elements in emotions and actions, the fifth element emerges in the conscious mind and automatically takes control of any situation.

For example, when confronted with antagonism, it is best not to become angry or aggressive. The Ether Element has taught us to control the fire by dowsing it with water and going with the flow without being affected by damaging attitudes.

Enhancing the Ether Element helps to smoothly synchronise our energies with the Universal energies. Balancing it can help to self-heal anything from addictions to heartbreak to depression. It is associated with the colour blue.

This feature has highlighted the need for harmony and balance with all five elements in order for the individual to maintain good health. Each of these five qualities influence and are dependent on each other, intertwined in an elaborate energetic expression. Strengthening the elements is the way forward to better health, but not perfect health.

The idea of perfect health and total balance is an aspirational state and not totally achievable in this lifetime. Let me qualify what I mean. We are not meant to be totally balanced in this lifetime. Imbalances require movement to self-correct and movement is life. There is a constant flow of energy to try and rectify this imbalance, and it is this ceaseless flow that enables life.

This lack of complete balance drives us on to search out our true meaning. By continually working with all the classical elements that exist within our personalities, we can refine our purpose here on Earth and evolve into more of who we are meant to be in this lifetime.