ELEMENTS PERSONALITY ASSESSOR

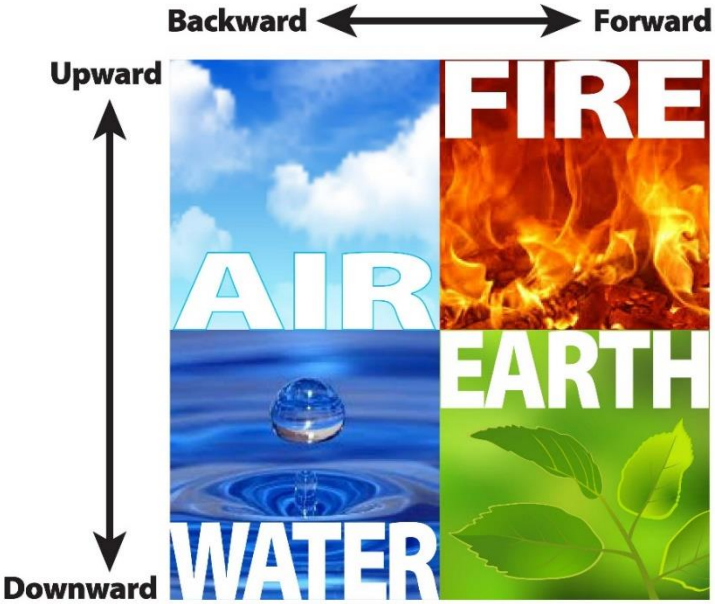
"Stoking one's own Fire can be advantageous, provided we don't burn ourselves"

It was nearly half a lifetime ago when a profound learning experience broadened my perspective to gain greater insight about myself as well as to better understand others. Those benefits expanded to improve my interactions, including to deftly manage conflict.

This regards an unusual, intensive workshop involving 36 hours over six days. Though multifaceted, at the heart of the training was a model based on the four natural elements: Fire, Earth, Air and Water.

For our purposes, we explored how each element associated with different personality types and how they interact with one another.

You likely know that companies often invest tens of thousands of dollars in teamwork models. Some associate people with different colors, or determine the likes of every employee's "spirit animal," or whatever. You get the idea. But, for me, this model has stood the test of time. Here's how it works.



First, you see how the elements are shown in four quadrants with each element positioned according to its natural movements. Air and Fire exist as gaseous forms that rise upward. Air tends to swirl backward. Fire tends to thrust forward. Water and Earth are situated downward just as they are on the ground. Water tends to flow backward and Earth tends to lean forward, much like trees and plants grow toward the sun.

Now let's associate personas. What's commonly known as a Type A personality is considered to be high-strung, aggressive and fiery; so it's easy to determine that these individuals belong in the Fire quadrant. If you catch a Type individual in motion, they even tend to walk fast and tilt forward.

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When we think of a Type B personality, they are more laid back and airy. Things seem to just roll off their shoulders. They are Air-dominant. Someone Earthy is well-grounded as if they are deeply and strongly rooted. They are the neutral element who will neither push nor can they be pushed. They stand their ground. And then there's Water, which associates with those regarded as pushovers. Think of what happens when you push a canoe. It flows backward with equal force.

There's more to it, but the goal here is to help you easily associate the element with which you identify as well as that of those among those closest to you. One more thing to keep in mind is that most everyone associates with two elements with one more dominant. It's likely that one is an innate element, associated with childhood temperament, and the other associates with life experience. This is classic nature versus nurture.

For me, it's definitive. My dominant element is Earth and my secondary is Fire. It's safe to say that I've tamed that innate quality and have worked hard to be more grounded.

ACTIVITY 1: ELEMENT PERSONIFICATION (TIME: 2 MINUTES)

Without overthinking, identify the dominant and secondary elements you personify. Is your dominant element the one you've always been or has your life experience shaped you to behave like a different element?

ACTIVITY 2: ELEMENT ASSIGNMENT (TIME: 2 MINUTES)

List at least 5 and up to 15 family members, friends, coworkers or other people in your life. Start with your Tribe and all those you evaluated in the Spider activity. Trust your gut. It should be pretty cut and dry. List everyone's dominant and secondary elements.

There's one more important component to this model that is best explained after you complete the activities below and that we're about to further explore. It's to apply how these element personas interact, especially when in conflict.

Most notable is when a fiery individual tries to bully or manipulate a Water-type, much like a Spider trying to take advantage of a non-Spider. The natural reaction of the Water-type is to yield. However, this is where things get even more interesting. Circumstantially, someone can choose to behave like an element other than their natural tendency. That Watery individual could choose to stand their ground, like Earth. Similarly, one of those individuals could choose to act passively, like Water, as a means to douse the flames.

Now let's consult the Conflict-Resolver.

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