

The following pages are an excerpt from the book *The Elements of Who We Are: A Guide to Understanding Yourself and Others* by Malaya L. Rider.

<http://www.our4elements.com/elem-bk.htm>

## *Air/Water*

Air/Water people embody the energy of the beginning of Summer when it is at its most expanded high-energy state. These people abide in the light, discerning, mental energy of Air as well as being drawn toward the soft, flowing, emotional energy of Water. The movement of these individuals has a light, quick, flowing quality and their body is often lean and agile.

Air/Water children usually have a joyful and optimistic attitude toward life that is similar to Water/Air people. An Air/Water woman remembers, “As a child I was the favorite. I was always cheery. I was very resilient and bounced back from things easily. I was robust and independent. I didn’t need as much attention as my brothers and sisters, but I wanted it.” Air/Water children usually have a wide range of interests and often demonstrate physical as well as mental agility. Many are quite bright with a quick, imaginative mind. One Air/Water woman recalls, “As a kid I thought of myself as kind of wacky. Now I see it as intelligent in a really original way. The more airy, wacky, funny parts of my personality got the attention as a child and I kind of ignored the more sensitive parts. Just now in my late thirties am I really beginning to honor this aspect of my being.” It often takes Air/Water individuals a few decades to really begin to explore their emotional being. Another Air/Water woman shares, “My family only talked about positive things. There was no open communication about emotions. I gulped it down until I was about 36, and then I started healing work and had two years where I couldn’t stop crying. My emotional awareness still goes in and out, but I am more aware all the time. I have periods when I hardly cry at all and then other periods when I’m easily moved to tears.”

Air/Water people do have a tendency to go happily about life and then after a period of time notice that something is missing. It is then that they remember to drop into their feelings and attend to their emotional world. Air/Water is another of the “double pull” combinations. The beginning of Summer inspires them to let go and release, to soar in the Air freely and in peace. The Water, however, wants to pull them down into feeling mode, to touch deeply and intimately. This can create some conflict within Air/Water individuals, for when they are going with the release-and-soar-free energy of the season they can begin to feel that they are being superficial and missing out on the deeper aspect of an experience.

The more comfortable Air/Water people are with their Water, the more open their heart is and the softer their flow. When their heart is closed the energy gets trapped in the mind and can become quite sharp and critical. Rather than honestly feeling their emotions they tend to project a lot of blame on others. Air/Water people in this state can be difficult to be around for their mind can really work overtime and come up with all sorts of reasons why they are unhappy. Getting into some form of creative therapy – whether it be dance/movement therapy, art therapy, music therapy or massage – which helps you move from your mind to your inner feeling world is a very good idea for someone in this situation.

Most Air/Water people have an optimistic, light-hearted playful attitude about life. An Air/Water woman says, “I believe in moving on from things, in not letting them get you down. I look at life as an adventure. When I’m on track, it all feels like fun – even when it’s hard. There’s no point in getting down about things because it’s all part of the game. We play because we enjoy the game, not because we’re trying to win.”

Of all the Air/Water people I know, I can think of only one whose optimism has been crushed. Her difficult childhood has taken its toll on her ability to cope with life, bringing her mind into almost constant battle with her emotions. Most Air/Water people, however, have a resiliency that carries them joyfully through life and they approach life with an easy playfulness that is refreshing and enjoyable to be around. Many have a very quick humor as well. Jim Carey portrays this Air/Water gift incredibly well.

When open and centered, Air/Water people have a particular glow that attracts others. Jimmy Stewart and Julia Roberts are good examples of some well-known individuals who exude the glow that is characteristic of Air/Water people.

The expansive nature of the Summer Solstice instills in us a sense of infinite possibilities. Air/Water people embody this energy and are drawn to the imagination as a means of exploring the realm of unmanifested potential. An Air/Water man shares that for him, “One of the most sacred things is the imagination. Feelings of love are right up there but the imagination is the wild card. It is the king. If the king goes it’s the end of the game. When your imagination is overwhelmed, then you die.”

Because of their propensity for infinite possibilities Air/Water people tend to be somewhat idealistic. An Air/Water man shares, “I seem to be designed to drift off on my ideas of reality rather than dealing with what is here.” Another Air/Water man shares, “The me that I want is the me that has never existed before. It does not have qualities. It just has potential. It is idealistic, but it’s the potential of surprise, something new occurring – the unexpected.” The nature of both air and water is to shift and change constantly so you truly never know what the next moment will bring. Clouds are a beautiful portrayal of the ever-changing dance between these two elements.

In addition, Air/Water people do not have the grounded energy of Earth that brings people’s focus to what is here in physical reality. When describing the differences between herself and her Air/Earth husband an Air/Water woman says, “I am more idealistic, spontaneous and impulsive than my husband is. He is more considerate of the consequences of things. He’s thoughtful and very thorough about thinking things through.” This is quite an accurate description of the way that Earth effects Air energy, which is obviously quite different than the way Water effects it. In general Air/Water people lean toward being idealists, while Air/Earth individuals tend to be realists.

Air/Water individuals are often very insightful and can be gifted healers, for they are blessed with the vision and communication skills of Air, and the emotional attunement of Water. In addition they do not get pulled into the sea of emotion as Water elements tend to, but are able to attune to the emotional energy without losing themselves within it. I have an Air/Water friend who has been a major ally for me. When I’ve gotten lost in struggle I’ve often called him. With his ability to hold a clear vision of my true self I’ve been able to find my way back to my center with much greater ease than I could have on my own. Whether for friends or clients, Air/Water people have the ability to see a person’s true essence, focus on that truth and assist the person in aligning with it. An Air/Water woman says, “In my healing work I’ve been able to perceive false beliefs and help people shift so they can see themselves as they really are. I enjoy watching people change as a result of my input. I love to facilitate huge shifts of joy and freedom and movement forward.” In general, Air/Water people seem to enjoy work situations that allow them to be an agent of change.

Although parenthood is a role that provides the opportunity to be both an agent of change and to witness continuous growth, parenting also requires a person to focus a fair amount of attention

on providing stability and consistent structure. This necessity can conflict with an Air/Water's preference to approach life from a place of spontaneous flow. An Air/Water mother shares, "As a parent, my weakness is in providing consistent routine. I am not as square a box as a child might like to have. But I am lots of fun and willing to support my son in whatever path he wants to take. I think it's great to observe what a child flowers into." The financial obligation that goes along with parenting can also cause Air/Water people to be hesitant to take on this role.

With regard to intimate partnerships "freedom in love" is very important to Air/Water people. Because of the intimacy needs of Water and the freedom needs of Air, they have a particularly strong desire for both intimacy *and* freedom. An Air/Water man says, "There's some combination of freedom and love that I yearn for. If I had a partner who had similar needs it would be great. Being honored for that would be healing and life-changing. I find that my heart is monogamous but my mind likes to be open to as much as possible."

The men, more so than the women it seems, tend to be more comfortable with polyamory than monogamy. Some are successful in actually practicing polyamory, while others simply hold it as their ideal. One Air/Water man who is very involved with a movement form called contact dance says, "Dance has recently become my metaphor for relationships because it is safer. Normally when I go to a dance place I naturally gravitate to whoever I can flow with or wants to flow with me. When it feels right to move on, you don't have to make a big thing about it and process, you just go onto the next person. So on the dance floor I am not monogamous and theoretically I'd be the same way in life but it's just too complicated – too many emotions, fear and jealousy and processing... I'd love to experience being with a group of people at that level of energy where you were just riding ahead of all the crap. You wouldn't have to have just one partner, nobody would feel any bad feelings. There would just be lots of fun and creativity and tantric bliss. But this society is so far removed from that, that to try to create it produces weird energy in everybody – so I think it's just theoretical. I prefer to be able to fantasize that I can be with anybody, but to have only one partner. I have enough room in my imagination to be totally free and bonded at the same time."

Air/Water *women* seem less drawn to the practice of polyamory, but do still hold freedom and independence in relationship as a high priority. They often express a strong repulsion to clingy behavior with reactions from anger to pushing their partner away when this is displayed. It is not uncommon for them to be attracted to "stability" in men, but to prefer, as one woman puts it "someone who has those qualities but is not a slave to them."

Air/Water people do well with partners who are fun, imaginative, playful and creative, who have good communication skills, an attitude of adventure and an enjoyable, somewhat quirky sense of humor. Not that these are the people they always end up with, but ideally their partner would embody these qualities. Within friendships, the qualities of humor and playfulness are also highly prized. Air/Water people are often quite entertaining and interesting to talk to. They enjoy being with people who appreciate a good laugh and are open to sharing spontaneous, unique experiences.

Although the view from the air and from the water are *very* different, Air/Water people seem to be able to dance between the two pretty gracefully. Often the dance is more of a challenge for their intimate partner than for Air/Water individuals themselves. The reason for this is that when interacting with others while in an Air mode they are rather detached and analytical, whereas in Water energy they abide in the sea of human and emotional connection. This shift can be a bit disconcerting for their intimates for it can feel hurtful when an Air element partner emotionally distances themselves as they switch into Air. The problems arise when they are coming from

their head when they really need to be speaking from their heart or feelings. Because Air is their primary element they have a tendency to revert to communicating from a strictly mental perspective. This is fine as long as they are not avoiding their feelings or the feelings of a loved one. Because the mental world is so different from the emotional world, it takes a lot of conscious awareness for Air/Water people, especially the men, to cultivate a comfort in dealing with their feelings. As they learn to honor the role of emotions in their life and let their heart be their guide, Air/Water people develop a softness and relax into themselves in a beautiful way.

As with Water/Air people the most active energy centers are the mind and the heart. Learning to balance these two aspects of themselves – honoring both the detachment and freedom needs of the Air as well as the emotional and connection needs of the Water – is an important part of the Air/Water journey.