

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>

## *Water/Air*

Water/Air people embody the energy at the end of Spring when it's moving upward and outward into the freedom of Summer's Air. They exude the soft flowing energy of Water and are pulled upward toward the lightness and activity of Air. By the end of Spring, Water energy is flowing forward freely like a river, bringing an abundance of loving, joyous energy. Water/Air individuals naturally have this light, loving energy coursing through their being and out to the world.

Water/Air people exude a very sweet and gentle essence. They are naturally optimistic and tend to see the world through rose-colored glasses. This can lead to them being taken advantage of by those with less than loving intentions, for it is not uncommon for others to perceive them as naïve. A Water/Air man shares, "My greatest challenge is learning the balance between caution and trust. Sadly, people have taken advantage of my trusting nature. My natural tendency is to trust without question – so that I am not paying attention to whose hand is in the cash register." This is a common dilemma for Water/Air individuals, who would prefer to believe that everyone is as kind as they are.

Water/Air individuals are emotional but less so than Water/Fire people. Because the Air pulls them upward they are less drawn to feel and explore the depth and intensity of emotions. Although they are often aware of their feelings, they do not usually dwell on them. They tend to focus on outward activity more than the inner emotional world. They often describe themselves as emotionally positive and are drawn toward an experience of peace and harmony. One Water/Air woman says that she is simply not emotionally intense about things. "Most of the time I find myself walking down a pretty even road unless I allow something to draw me off course. I'm angry occasionally, but it doesn't last. I sometimes wonder why it is that some people *are* so intense about things. I don't feel that intensity."

Water/Air children are naturally kind, polite, curious and cheerful and tend to be more chatty than Water/Fire children. One woman recalls her nickname of "sunshine," saying that it suited her well. Another Water/Air woman remembers, "When I was a child I wrote little stories and fairy tales and painted pictures, both literally and in my mind. I saw life as a true romantic fairy tale, which would always have a happy ending!" A Water/Air man describes himself as "happy-go-lucky" as a child and says, "It always seemed like I was floating on top of situations, bobbing to the top, buoyant. I always tried to look at the positive side of anything. I felt blessed."

Feeling blessed seems to be a consistent theme among Water/Air people. Most of them feel connected to their spiritual essence from a young age. It is not uncommon for the Water/Air girls in Christian families to feel a bond to Mother Mary and to go through a phase of wanting to be a nun. A Water/Air man, who describes himself as spiritual but not religious, remembers writing in his journal to God when he was young and says, "My knowing of God has always been there. It's not something I learned. I just know God with the wholeness of my being. Even as a young kid I knew that. I always, always felt protected. Even though the world did not feel safe, my connection to God was intact, it was always there, it's what carried me through everything." Although not all Water/Air individuals are so connected as children, most do connect with their spiritual essence at some point in their lives and they usually have an experience of finding

themselves once they do. A Water/Air woman says, “I didn’t know Spirit as a child. I felt like I was flapping in the breeze before I found it.”

If Water/Air individuals have grown up in an environment that doesn’t support their sweet, gentle essence, they tend to develop a bit of a sharp mental edge, relying too much on their intellect to protect them. This is quite a contrast to their underlying softness and can be a bit confusing, for both themselves and for others. The most natural and honest place for a Water element to come from is the heart, so attracting people and places that honor this allows them to drop into this space and interact from there.

Many Water/Air individuals have a natural ability for diplomacy, for they have the sensitivity of the Water along with Air’s lightness and ability to communicate. Many times I have been in awe at the ease with which they handle potentially uncomfortable situations – being able to communicate clearly without offending people. It’s fortunate that many of them have this ability, because Water/Air people do not usually like confrontation and will often avoid it at all cost.

*Avoiding* confrontation, of course, has its own drawbacks. Although Water/Air people do exude a very sweet essence, no one is sweet all of the time and maintaining this position when they are actually upset is hard on their psyche and turns their natural sweetness into a superficial façade. Getting comfortable with the more conflicting emotions within themselves, especially anger, can be very challenging. In general, Water/Air people have difficulty both acknowledging and expressing anger. This seems to be because it is in such contrast to their normally sweet disposition. A Water/Air woman says, “I have a low tolerance for getting angry. I am very uncomfortable with yelling. It is too different from my view of myself. It is *not* okay with me.”

Water/Air individuals can also have trouble accepting other people’s anger, usually retreating when faced with this intense emotion. One woman says, “I used to be so threatened by others’ anger – like I’d be destroyed or something. I still avoid angry personalities. I feel unsafe. Sometimes I don’t set boundaries in order to avoid conflict. I can be a pushover with real strong personalities. I accommodate.”

Setting boundaries is often the greatest challenge for Water/Air individuals for they have at least two personality characteristics that feed into this issue. One is that their inherent sweetness and caring nature makes it difficult for them to say “no” especially if they believe that it might hurt someone else’s feelings. Learning to be honest even if they think it might upset someone is often a major hurdle for Water/Air individuals. A Water/Air woman puts it this way, “It’s hard to say no to people, to have a boundary. Also I tend to think I am capable of more than I can possibly do.” This statement points to both sides of the boundary issue. Along with their caring nature Water/Air people usually have an abundance of energy and truly enjoy putting it out to the world fairly consistently. This same woman describes herself as a “relentless river of giving.” Unfortunately, Water/Air people have a tendency to think that they can do it all, so they say “yes” too often, leaving themselves depleted and unable to care for their own needs. A Water/Air man says, “I have lots of energy and just keep pumping it out. But giving too much without receiving is bad. I feel used up. It hurts to hold back though, because then I get all stopped up.” Finding the balance between getting stopped up and used up is often a tricky one for Water/Air people, who can lean toward giving too much time and energy to others and leaving too little for themselves.

Because their energy moves outward at a pretty fast pace, Water/Air people can have difficulty in situations that slow them down a great deal. For this reason they tend to ignore illness and can keep on caring for others when they really need to take care of themselves. They also seem to have some difficulty with the Winter season and tend to prefer late Spring and

Summer. A Water/Air woman shares a feeling that is common among these individuals. She says, “I like the long days, warmth and high energy of Summer. The inward pull of Winter goes against my inherent outward-connecting nature.”

Attending to detail is another aspect of life that many Water/Air people resist, for it also requires that a person slow down. Paperwork is not usually the highlight of their week, to say the least. They do better if the details have to do with a creative project, but most prefer to avoid focusing on details as much as possible. A Water/Air woman shares, “It can be challenging for me to put my ideas and visions into reality. As a choreographer I have this idea in my mind of this dance and it feels really wonderful, but to be able to really get it and figure out the individual steps is difficult. After I have all the moves, the fun part is to work with the dancers and teach them and to rehearse and perform. That part I like because I get to connect with people and co-create beauty.”

Water/Air people prefer to go with their own flow and often resist and resent people who slow them down too much. They especially have difficulty with those who are very meticulous or pragmatic. When under stress Water/Air people tend to speed up their pace, whereas some other elemental combinations – say Air/Earth for instance – tend to slow down and try to ensure perfection of every detail. The interaction between these two elemental combinations when under stress can cause stress for the rest of us!

When Air is the secondary element it can either lift a person’s energy straight up or it can have a swirling, whirlwind effect. Water/Air individuals in the midst of a whirlwind can easily become scattered and can appear rather ditsy for it is difficult for them to focus on any one action or thought long enough to follow through coherently. Some Water/Air people spend most of their waking life in this scattered place. Others are affected in this way only when they are out of balance, have a lot of activity going on, or when they are avoiding some underlying feelings. Taking the time to slow down and check-in with what their heart is wanting can help Water/Air people to utilize their Air energy in a positive way rather than having it spin them out.

Although Water/Air individuals enjoy loving connection as much as Water/Fire people, they are not as drawn to long-term partnerships because their Air energy is attracted to freedom and autonomy. A Water/Air woman shares, “I don’t want to be owned by anyone. A certain amount of freedom in relationship is very important to me. I don’t really know how to rely on someone else.” The upward lift of Air can make it difficult for Water/Air people to relax into the support of a committed long-term relationship.

The desire to be a parent seems fairly mixed among Water/Air adults. They have plenty of energy to keep up with children, so that’s in their favor. They also have an abundance of love to give. Their challenge usually comes in setting limits and providing a consistent structure for their children.

As with all elemental combinations there are variations on the theme depending on the ratio of masculine to feminine energy. Most Water/Air people have a fair amount of Air – which is a masculine energy. The more masculine energy a person has, the easier it is to keep up with the fast pace of modern society. The Air gives these individuals an abundance of outward-moving energy that thrives on being active. They have the ability to succeed in many work environments as long as their gift for connecting and communicating personally with others is utilized and respected.

Some Water/Air individuals have only enough Air to confuse the flow of their Water, making it difficult to choose a life path or move forward in one direction for any length of time. Their energy field can have a bit of a foginess to it. They can spend much of their adult life

floating from one thing to another without ever really committing to anything or anyone. These Water/Air people often have some difficulty communicating with others, for they find it challenging to get clear enough in their own mind to put something into words. Creative expression is key to helping these individuals get to know themselves and connect with others.

Creative expression is often an important medium for Water/Air people in general because it allows them to bring their abundant, yet somewhat elusive energy into form and to share it with others. Air has a tendency to scatter the flow of Water and can cause it to evaporate before Water/Air individuals can make a decision about where they want their energy to flow, causing some to be rather indecisive. At the same time Air provides an abundance of spontaneous energy, which is at the heart of creativity. Sometimes Water/Air people can communicate through art, movement or song what they cannot through words alone. Those with more Air energy are often very expressive with words as well and enjoy conceptualizing through writing. They seem especially drawn to poetry and children's stories.

The most active energy centers in Water/Air people are the heart and the mind. These two parts of ourselves have rather different agendas and the dialogue between the two can be a bit challenging at times. Water/Air people can have a tendency to let their mind get the best of them. A daily practice that helps them to relax into a still place and listen to their heart rather than their fluctuating mind can help this immensely. As Water/Air people learn to honor and stay with their inner flow, not letting outer circumstances or mental chatter determine their actions, abundant beauty will inevitably blossom.