

Feng Shui and the Five Elements

by Kathleen Karlsen

The five element form of feng shui classifies various aspects of interior design according to their relationship to the predominant forces in nature. The Chinese five element system views wood, fire, earth, metal and water as the primary natural elements. Homes and interior decorative objects may be balanced through it with one or more of the five elements in the following ways: using the actual element for construction (i.e. wood), using something that is symbolic of the element (i.e. fountain) and using colors or shapes representing the element.

The five element system of feng shui is both a philosophical and practical approach to assessing human wellness on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels. This unique classification system helps to explain patterns of behavior and how our own energy levels mirror the transformational cycles in the natural world.

By analyzing your compatibility with the five elements-wood, fire, water, earth, and metal-you can determine excesses or deficiencies in these energies in your personality and your surroundings. Understanding the five elements and balancing them through the use of this can thereby increase your vitality. Let's examine the five basic types of energy.

Wood energy is constantly in motion, driven to grow and expand like the green shoots bursting forth in spring. A person with a predominantly "wood" personality seeks new challenges and adventures. Wood personalities tend to be competitive, bold, direct and ambitious. If you desire to strengthen the qualities of wood in your personality, the most appropriate art would include landscapes, florals, and gardens.

Fire energy is characterized by its ability to give off warmth and attract others. Predominately "fire" types place a great deal of emphasis on interpersonal relationships. According to five element feng shui, they are romantic and idealistic, enthusiastic and emotional. Fire energy is the energy of life, represented by sunshine, warm-blooded animals and people. To strengthen your fire energy, art including people and animals is appropriate. On the other hand, if you tend to be overly excited and overly dependent on relationships with others, fire energy can be balanced by emphasizing the other four elements, especially water.

Water has the ability to change effortlessly without losing its essential character. In five element feng shui, water types are resourceful and single-minded, flowing over problems like a river. Water types also have the ability to pool their resources to be in a position of strength when opportunities arises. The art that is useful for strengthening the water element depicts rivers, waterfalls or the ocean. Any design with asymmetrical, flowing shapes or curved lines is representative of water. To bring water symbolism into your environment, choose art incorporating glass, crystals, fountains or mirrors.

The earth element is able to absorb excesses of the other elements. Earth personalities are forgiving and compassionate. Earth types are wonderful friends and great listeners. Earth types have an affinity for ceramics, tile, stucco, bricks and adobe. To strengthen earth energy, use depictions of deserts, fields, and farms.

Metal is characterized by exceptional strength and endurance. According to the traditions of feng shui, people with metal as their predominant compatibility are disciplined and strong-willed. Metal types are often creative and seek to out picture the highest aspirations of life in their work and art. To strengthen metal energy, chose images that include majestic mountains that are firmly grounded but reaching towards the heavens.

Achieving balance through five element feng shui is a matter of emphasizing one or more elements for an intended purpose. Each of the five elements support or nourish each other in some way and can also limit or control each other in other ways. Creating your own personal paradise in your surroundings with an appropriate balance of the five elements will result in a strong foundation for increased happiness and success in all areas of your life.

©2004 Kathleen Karlsen, Living Arts Enterprises

Reprinted with Permission from *The Natural Health News*