

Speaking of Astrology Essays and Rants

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Yes, Most Daily Horoscopes Are Junk

But Daily Horoscopes Are Not Real Astrology

By Rebecca Brents

You may know "astrology" through the pop-culture categories of dime-store booklets or through reading your daily horoscope in the newspaper. These are supposedly the descriptions of who you are and what's going to happen to you today based on some mysterious elements at work in the sky and little more than the luck of the draw you were handed on the day of the year you were born.

Usually the dime-store booklets are simplistic but accurate as far as they go. Daily horoscopes in the newspaper, though, resemble real astrology about as much as Styrofoam resembles real food.

I'm an astrologer. If I do say so myself, I'm a good astrologer ... who has for over forty years studied this intriguing metaphysical subject, and when people say the daily horoscopes in the newspaper are meaningless and silly, I have to agree.

But it's also meaningless, silly, and short-sighted to judge the whole field of astrology itself as worthless based on what even good, competent practitioners of the craft (and there are plenty of us around!!) agree are ridiculous distortions. Most daily horoscopes aren't even an amusing cartoonish representation of what real astrology is all about.

It is possible to write a decent daily horoscope. In fact, I write one that reflects the varying emotional climate as it shifts and realigns itself -- changing its focus sometimes several times a day. I publish it on the front page of the [Enchanted Spirit](#) website; it's called [The Lunar Light](#).

Its accuracy sometimes astonishes even me, and yes, I consult it myself quite often as I go about my daily routine. But the information there is just that ... a point or two of knowledge to have and keep in mind.

I also stay aware of what else is going on in the sky the way I stay aware of the days of the week, the changing seasons, and the daily weather patterns. But, even I don't run my life "by astrology" in any way I'd call superstitious or grossly inconvenient ... and neither should you.

I also say it's just good sense if it's stormy outside to dress for the occasion. Give yourself some extra time to get where you want to go. Plan for the unexpected. Keep in mind that the roads are slick and you need to drive with extra care.

And when Mars is opposing Pluto in the sky ... as it is as I write this article, realize it's likely people are feeling pushed, impatient, hassled, and on edge. Tempers may flare. Folks may take foolish chances. They won't react kindly to interference or delays. There's a lot of resentment and anger floating around just under life's surface -- and it won't take much to set it off.

So ... maybe a little extra patience can help defuse a problem -- or avoid it altogether. Maybe a little extra courtesy can help ease this bump in the road for everyone. Maybe thinking twice before you act -- or react -- could add extra safety to the daily hustle whose deceptive calm ... or already ruffled edges ... conceals explosive possibilities.

If you ask me, that attitude that can't hurt. As an astrologer, I know that any square or opposition between Mars and another planet indicates a time for caution ... again, something to keep in mind. Stressed Mars energy (which is what an opposition or a square represents) is explosive,

temperamental, and indicative of poor judgment -- and there's often something "spectacular" about what occurs at such times, when things go terribly, terribly wrong.

Mars was opposing Uranus the night The Station Nightclub fire in New Jersey became the 4th deadliest in U.S. history. Mars was opposing Uranus and Neptune when the Waco compound of the Branch Davidians was stormed ... with the resulting fire and carnage.

Mars was opposing the Moon and moving into an opposition with Jupiter on September 11, 2001 when the World Trade Center in New York City was demolished by terrorists. (Saturn was also opposing Pluto; the Sun was square to both of them; and Venus opposed Uranus. To an astrologer, it was a messy day in the sky as well as a tragic one on the ground.)

Mars was moving out of an opposition with Jupiter and into an opposition with Pluto the night Nichole Brown Simpson was killed by "somebody." Mars was square to the Moon, Uranus and Jupiter the night Princess Diana was killed. And sure, most people on earth made it through those same nights without being murdered or dying in a car accident. So were there special reasons why those two women were particularly "at risk" at that time. Yes.

The night Nicole Simpson died, Mars -- already in trouble in the sky, was conjunct her Natal Mercury (an indication of possible arguments and decisions made in anger), opposing her Natal Neptune (an indication of self-sabotaging or self-destructive actions), and square to her Natal Uranus (an indication of hasty, ill-considered, impulsive actions.)

Are these the best conditions under which to walk out of your house and confront a shadowy figure in your driveway, whether or not you know ... or think you know ... who it is?

The best theory I have read about what might have happened that night suggests OJ, angry at his ex-wife's appearance at their daughter's recital with another man, may have gone to her house, not to kill her, but to slash her tires -- expecting that his imminent trip out of town that night would give him an alibi for the incident.

That explains the timing of the attack -- just prior to the limousine coming to take him to the airport -- and the reason why he was at her house with a knife. But Nicole's mother had forgotten her glasses at a restaurant that evening, and Nicole was watching for Ron Goldman to drop them by her house on his way home from work.

Instead, as the theory goes, she saw "somebody" messing with her car, went out to confront whoever it was, and was killed when that "somebody" panicked at being discovered. This scenario certainly fits what her horoscope describes.

The night Princess Diana died, Mars, again under pressure in the sky, was square to Natal Mars in her chart (indicating actions at cross-purposes with each other). It was conjunct her Natal Neptune (indicating self-sacrificing actions and actions undertaken for emotional rather than logical reasons). It was square her Natal Uranus (again indicating hasty, ill-considered, impulsive actions.) It was square her Natal Jupiter (indicating excessive, over-the-top reactions.)

Probably not the best conditions under which to get into a high-speed midnight chase with the paparazzi through the streets of Paris ... to say nothing of having a drunk at the wheel.

Might knowing that the energies afoot at the time were problematic, and that those energies in comparison to placements in their Natal Charts were especially dicey have offered these women at least a chance to rethink their fatal choices?

It's a question without an answer, of course. And it's not the kind of information you'll ever find in a daily horoscope. It is, however, there for anyone to read if they know literally "how to read the signs" ... or if they have someone they trust help them decipher the celestial code.

And if knowing these conditions exist and listening to what they mean helps me get myself and my family more safely through the trouble spots of life, I'd be an idiot to ignore them.

Some people may think that's the equivalent of clutching a rabbit's foot and muttering incantations. Maybe they feel the same way about holding a rosary and reciting prayers for protection. But I believe prayers work, that thoughts are things, that extra caution is never misplaced ... and that information is power.

So I will keep on reading charts ... and heeding what they say .. and agreeing with those who say most daily horoscopes, as an example of real astrology, are pretty darn useless.

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They Call It Entertainment

Astrology Wrapped in Weasel-words,
Disclaimers, and Excuses
By Rebecca Brents

Astrology. It's perhaps the most popular of the occult sciences, having at least a toehold in almost everybody's consciousness -- a reputation gained usually through the daily horoscope whose idiocy continues to find a home on drugstore news-stands and in newspapers everywhere.

There are plenty of people who "don't believe in astrology" ... but who have no real grasp of what it's really about. And, even scarier, there are bunches of people who say they believe in astrology who also haven't a clue what Astrology is, how it works, or what it can really do.

Thus, Astrology has the strange distinction of suffering from both the ignorance of its opponents and the ignorance of its proponents, neither of whom seem much interested in more education.

Lots of people think they have at least a notion of what astrology is. It is supposedly a way of describing character and a way of foretelling the future based on the belief that "the stars" somehow have sway over the affairs of human beings.

People think they know what astrology can (or cannot) do -- predict your future, help your lost and lonely self connect at long last with your "soulmate," heighten the odds you'll come up with the perfect ticket in the perfect place and win that elusive, alluring lottery.

Astrology may occasionally fill in some of these blanks, but it will never deliver these specific goods. To expect it will (and try to flog it into performing such miracles) is a fool's errand. To ask anything to perform a task for which it is not suited is an invitation to disappointment. So, the fact is, Astrology frequently does not live up to its bogus billing. (What a surprise!!)

But this doesn't mean Astrology itself is a crock of you-know-what. It means many people believe things about Astrology that aren't true ... and it also means there are people who call themselves "astrologers" ... who aren't. At least they're not much good at what they claim to know.

Again -- what a surprise!! Just as there are inept mechanics, incompetent carpenters, doctors who in no way qualify as healers, people being paid a teacher's salary that don't pass on anything worth knowing, actors who can't act, and cooks whose meals are more fit for the garbage than the dining table ... there are people claiming to be astrologers who should be ashamed of saying that.

Even the arguably competent astrologers themselves do the science a disservice when they hide their work, as if behind a fig leaf and a fan, under the disclaimer "for entertainment only."

That funny little giggle and dismissive literary warning offends me. It always has. Either these people believe in what they're doing enough to stand behind it ... or they're frauds who ought to step up and claim that title. Either they're good at what they're doing or they're not.

And if they want to simper and smirk and wink-wink-wink behind the veil of "oh, oh, oh, for entertainment only", someone should boldly invite them to get off the field so that people who can practice this craft with the grace it deserves and deftly reveal its wisdom can show them how it's done.

There's a popular internet Astrologer -- yes, one of tens of thousands in the world, I'm sure -- who pulls thirty six sentences from a random pool of meaningless tripe every day, pastes it together in three sentence blocks, publishes it (even SELLS it!!) and calls it a "horoscope."

It has nothing to do with offering knowledge -- nothing to do with giving an authentically advertised product in exchange for money. It's not a horoscope. It's not astrology. It's fraud. And anyone who feels duped by this, taken in by this, mocked by this, and ridiculed by this has every right to those feelings.

People who look at this crap and see in it the evidence that Astrology is a hoax ... have a right to that conclusion as far as it goes. But the fact is, they're not seeing the whole story. They're not even seeing a bad imitation of the whole story. They are seeing the work of someone whose laziness, possible ignorance, and blatant contempt for his audience is being dressed up and masqueraded as Astrology.

Adequate analogies escape me as I consider this. Even a butcher who calls himself a surgeon at least traffics in blood, flesh, cutting instruments, and a modicum of skilled labor with what he does. A first grader who bills himself as a poet will probably work with recognizable words and maybe even a passing glance at rhyme or image. Either one of these people has more integrity in his claim to a craft than the purveyor of "horoscopes" such as these.

The elegance and value of Astrology in the hands of someone who truly loves it, knows it, and is able to use it as intended pushes the envelope of description past the limitation of words.

I like to think I'm one of those people ... someone who sees and reveres the awesome beauty with which Astrology depicts the various energies and cycles at work in all our lives, the delicacy and precision with which a Natal Chart describes the character and potentials of the person who owns it, the profound wisdom offered when you look at a chart and grasp, through these strange symbols and squiggles, what Life is asking of you or a client in meeting the promise or challenges described there.

I can become transfixed by charts and what they contain, the mysterious code revealing such wonders ... such wisdom .. such power and intelligence, something I, indeed, can only equate with God.

In Astrology, I see meanings and intentions revealed, lessons and evolutionary growth steps unfolding, the clash of opposing wills and needs, and the complexity of everything ... absolutely everything ... abrading, adjusting, aligning, supporting ... and working always toward temporary harmony, only to break apart again and begin the moves of yet another dance.

If, in your life, you yearn to find meaning, if an overview of The Big Picture and your place in it would be a sublime gift, Astrology can give you that. If it would help your social efforts to understand why you and one person get along famously and are so unfailingly good for each other ... while you and another person hit nothing but sharp corners and inevitably lock horns, Astrology can give you that.

If you'd find it worthwhile to see why life is jumbled and difficult at certain times ... and when it is likely to be clear and easy (or at least easier!!) again, Astrology can give you that, too.

If being able to structure your life in line with greater currents of natural rhythm would help you swim, and surf, and snorkel as appropriate instead of struggle ... and then, when the time is right, let you get down to business with decent blueprints in hand instead of just a devout hope that you're on the right track ... Astrology can give you that as well.

In the 40+ years I've worked to learn this inspiring discipline, my respect for it has only deepened. Just as religion and ethics have their place in my life, so does Astrology. I live with it. I use it. It speaks to me ... and in its presence, life makes sense.

I would be so much less without it.

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Astrology: The Cosmic Science

That Keeps On Keeping On

By Celeste L. Walker

Like a lot of things you can't measure by quantifiable, scientific, black-and-white standards, Astrology as a serious topic of study ... or even something to bring up in a friendly conversation ... falls in and out of favor.

There was a time when asking a new acquaintance his or her Sun Sign was a charming, cut-to-the-chase way of both introducing yourself and finding out something you could hang your hat on about the motives and basic character of the other person. Lots of people looking for love or just new friends knew a thumbnail sketch (or just a few outstanding qualities) of all the signs.

It was the 60's, and flower children and hippies were wearing long skirts, frilly shirts, braiding daisies into their hair, going barefoot and talking a lot about love and the Age of Aquarius.

It was a strange and surreal time ... with a war taking shape and happening in a place called Viet Nam, a generation gap taking shape and happening at home ... and young people seeing the world and its values in a lot different light than their parents did.

In the words of Peter, Paul and Mary, a troubadour trio that sang the poetry of that era ... wasn't that a time? A time to try the souls of men, Wasn't that a terrible time?

In the sky, Uranus and Pluto met in a conjunction that for several years shook the foundations of our beliefs, our social order, and in many ways ... the world.

And then, they separated and moved on ... like a lot of people in a lot of relationships that came together in a dream-like haze of uninhibited sexuality, affection, idealism, expedience, or common concepts ... or just because it "seemed like a good idea at the time" ... and then, unable to sustain the dream ... because life changed, happened, came together in different patterns and made different demands ... moved on.

"What's your sign?" as a pick-up line became cliché, contemptible, ridiculous. Ok, maybe it always was ... because as any even semi-serious student of astrology already knows, the Sun Sign qualities of a person's character are just the surface ... and in anything like a friendship, a relationship, or a marriage ... you have to deal with the whole person. Warts and all, as they say.

The Sun Sign foundations and ambitions, the Moon Sign emotions, the Mercury Sign interests and viewpoints, the Venus Sign relationship values, the Mars Sign capacity for action and self-assertion -- they all come as an inseparable set of qualities in the intricate structure of every human being.

You don't get to pick and choose "the good parts" ... and in something as complex as another person, it's a cinch some of "his or her" qualities are going to clash with some of "your" qualities ... and thus the battle lines are drawn.

So, for reasons perhaps as superficial and silly as the very reasons why it became a standard part of pop culture for a while, Astrology faded from favor as the dress-for-success 80's arrived ... with its own set of soon-to-be out-dated ideas and principles ... as the children of the flower children came of age and took their place, made their marks, and asserted their power on the business and cultural scene.

But as with anything that has basic value and useful truth at its core, the wisdom of Astrology stuck in the consciousness of enough people who found it worthwhile that soon more information ... better information ... found its way into the mainstream bookstores and the social consciousness.

On one level, that means you weren't considered a raving lunatic ... or inconveniently crazy ... by as many people because you "believed in astrology."

And gradually ... in the process of synthesis Jung himself described in his wonderful works of psychology ... an accommodation was reached between "believers" and non-believers, until today, it's just as likely you'll find someone who knows what it means when you say you're a Taurus and don't like surprises as someone who snorts at you for "spouting that nonsense."

That this represents more tolerance of diversity between "believers" and their fellows overall has to be seen as a win for seekers of truth, wherever they find it. And for those of us who understand devoutly the richness of what we've found ... and what we're talking about, it is undeniably a very good thing.

It certainly pleases me, even if I'm still a member of a minority looking for meaning wherever we find it ... in the complexity of a most multi-faceted world.

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The Art of Astrology

By Annabelle Leigh

Here's what I would call a basic working principle in Astrology. Each of the Zodiac signs represents certain unique and identifiable character traits associated with people born with planetary placements in those signs.

Some of these qualities are positive, constructive and highly desirable. Others are not. In fact, some of these same positive traits under stress and pressure -- either from within the personality or temporarily present in the outside world -- become negative, destructive and highly problematic.

In the finicky political correctness of our times, it's not "proper" to call a trait (or an experience either!!) "negative." We're supposed to say it's "challenging" or "difficult" or "needs careful attention." I say ... "Whatever ..."

It's a fact that a rose by any other name is still a rose. And a crappy personality trait is still a problem ... definitely a negative experience -- for both the person who owns the conflicting energies and those who have to put up with him at work, at home, in the world.

A positive quality of Aries, for instance, is its assertiveness, its initiative, its get-up-and-go. An Aries on a mission will by golly get the job done. But that same Aries energy under stress or beset by "difficulties and challenges" will become pushy, bossy, angry and even violent.

Still, when the dust settles, you'll probably find that while using all those traits in ways that were most unpleasant and disruptive, Aries, still ... indisputably got the job done. Did what it wanted and proposed to do. However, most folks would agree that one side of this equation is admirable and virtuous ... and the other side might justifiably land you in the slammer.

It helps sometimes to remember that everyone has all twelve signs included in his horoscope. Everybody's personality contains Aries energy somewhere. Even if they don't have planets in that sign, they probably have that sign on a house cusp. And even if that sign is intercepted in their chart ... Aries energy is still bubbling away beneath the surface of their life in the affairs of the house containing the interception.

It may be repressed, disowned, hidden away and denied like some crazy aunt in the attic nobody wants to talk about. But it's there, nevertheless, and in the right circumstances it will surely manage to make its presence known.

Everyone works with each of these energies somewhere in his character, somewhere in his life and his experience all the time. The great and not-so-great uniqueness in every individual's personality depends heavily on just where those various energies express themselves, how much of each sign energy is present, how accessible it is for the native, how easy it is for him to work with it, and what he chooses to do with it under whatever circumstances exist..

Two people can each paint the same scene ... and one will turn out a crude, disproportionate, graceless result ... and the other may produce a masterpiece. Even two recognized and renowned artists will take the same subject, the same scene ... and turn out vastly different interpretations in what they create with their canvas, paint and brush-strokes.

An observer will certainly see the same scene in their different renditions. But the master-artists did not create the same painting. Each gave it his own style, his own slant, his own shading and perspective.

That's exactly how it is with people. Every person is his own work of art. His life, his personality, his achievements, his problems -- are all distinctly and undeniably his own. His star-twins ... people born on the same day as he was ... took the same "raw materials" and created their own stuff from its contents.

As an Astrologer, I can assure you it is always a surprise to see what someone has done with what he was given (or what he brought into this life, I suppose, is the real truth of the matter.) Sometimes the surprise is wonderful. And sometimes it's truly sad. (Not always completely the native's fault, either.)

Astrology ... is life ... is art. No kidding. Exactly like that.

Astrology is also for Skeptics

Real astrology doesn't tell you how to run your life.
It doesn't make your decisions for you.
It doesn't say you're consigned to a certain "fate."

Real astrology charts life's natural cycles.
It describes creation and experiences
in ways that make sense.

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Getting Your Chart Done

It Can Become the Turning Point of a Lifetime

By Rebecca Brents

In my experience, people often come to an astrologer with a kind of wary attitude ... a tentativeness that says just beneath the surface of their curiosity they wonder if this isn't really a silly thing to do, something just this side of voodoo and superstition ... or maybe one huge step over the line.

But they're willing to invest somewhere between 25 and a couple of hundred dollars in the effort ... for the entertainment value alone if nothing else. And they're willing to spend an hour -- or maybe two -- hearing what an astrologer has to tell them about themselves.

And if they actually learn something about themselves and the miracle of their being from the effort -- well, that will be a huge plus. And they're not sure if they dare let themselves hope for that.

Oh, if they only knew. An hour of time doesn't even BEGIN to scratch the surface of what Astrology can tell you, can help you do, can teach you, or how it can infuse your life with a rich awareness I honest-to-goodness don't know I could have discovered -- or come to experience -- any other way. Two hours of time won't do it either -- and neither will ten.

To me, you need to not just learn the academic information your chart contains with a quick read-through ... or two or three. You need to really know it -- and then watch it play out onstage in your life in all its magnificent splendor to really see the wealth and dimension Astrology can provide. I promise you, it's impressive.

Self-understanding is a lifelong process. And life itself is the greatest experiential workshop you could ever imagine. Maybe that's why it took the good Lord himself to dream it up -- and arrange all the props to support your education ... and mine ... and everyone else's.

Self-understanding isn't something you'll accomplish in an hour with somebody else telling you stuff about yourself. If self-understanding is a treasure that has meaning for you, you'll work with it daily -- sometimes intensely -- from the moment you realize such a thing is possible until they plant you in the ground -- while in some other dimension, you process what you've learned and make arrangements to do it again.

Counseling, analysis, virtually all of the helping and healing therapies and professions have as their stated goal the achievement of greater self-awareness, self-understanding, and from that the ability to manage and experience your life more fully. To me, this is the noblest aim of all.

But they all take dedication. They all take time. Astrology is no different. It takes dedication; it takes time. But the depth of knowledge it can provide about you as a spiritual being, the dimension and perspective it can give about the life you are living -- is priceless. It is also one of the fastest means of achieving a tremendous amount of wisdom and information I have ever found.

Astrology will not only tell you about yourself ... your character, your potentials, your talents, your challenges, your essential being ... it will tell you about the life you are living -- and have lived -- and will live.

It will tell you what's going on ... and when ... and approximately when your current dilemma will come to an end, if that's important to you. It will tell you what you're trying to learn from the experience -- or as I sometimes put it in my writing, it will tell you what life is asking of you.

It will tell you how to use your abilities to be the person you were made to be. It will show you the person you are intended to become. It will give suggestions about how to use an opportunity or a talent more productively. It will do the same about how to work with a problem to either get through it faster or at least show you what might help you cope with the aggravations more effectively.

In doing all this Astrology provides perspective and meaning on you and the life you are living better than anything else I have ever seen or studied.

A wonderful therapist who helped me through some very rough and unhappy months once asked me during our time together what I wanted from my life. I immediately answered that I wanted my life to make sense. I meant that passionately. I wanted not to just understand and accept what was happening to me, but why and what this particular piece meant in the context of the sometimes bewildering drama that has played out with me, in me and around me.

She looked at me like that was one of the oddest responses she'd ever heard. I was just as puzzled she would think so. But in that strange way life has of answering questions -- sometimes when you didn't even know you'd asked them, I heard a piece of wisdom to cherish.

I was in my 40's ... and a pretty good astrologer -- thanks to a lot of work through the years. But suddenly in the words from my own mouth I heard why Astrology had been and had become such a passion for me.

I had spent tens of thousands of dollars and tens of thousands of hours reading and studying what other people had to say about it ... the things they thought they had learned -- some of it garbage, some of it great, some of it complete and total gibberish, some of it pure gold.

I had boxes of books and reams of notes ... and virtually all of my friends, most of whom had known me for decades, had absolutely no idea that Astrology was one of my interests. I was that private about it.

And in that lightning strike of a moment I understood why. I want my life to make sense ... and in Astrology, with its funny symbols, and peculiar tables and wedge-shaped slices of a circle I had found a way that it did.

I didn't broadcast my growing collection of knowledge through the years for several reasons. First, I didn't want to pigeonhole the important people in my life into one of twelve different groups any more than they wanted to be labeled.

I didn't want to learn Astrology to get the scoop on the people I knew and the people I loved so I could assure myself I now knew everything worth knowing about them. I wanted to learn what Astrology told me about them so I could try to see and understand their lives and their world through their eyes.

That's not really possible, of course, but Astrology takes me closer to that place than I could ever come without it. I'm confident I see more dimensions by a long shot than I would otherwise.

I'd like to say it makes me more patient, but I'm not sure that's true. I still get pretty annoyed when I see people acting completely in character, but in ways that are irritating, counter-productive, unpleasant and inconvenient. Sometimes just seeing what they're trying to achieve, what need they're trying to fill, albeit badly, and helping that happen as much as possible unlocks some of the tension.

I won't say it makes relationships a snap ... because it doesn't. People are still complicated beings, infinitely diverse and surprisingly creative. But it does help me make better sense of them ... and then decide whether I want to work with that and how -- and it does help me choose to let them be themselves, step back and watch the experiential workshop in action. So maybe if I can't claim patience, I can claim ... well, forbearance.

Mostly though Astrology helps me explore the terrain and fashion the links I need to have in my relationship with myself -- and that, believe me is a vital one. I will stay with it until the end of my days. That, of course, is me. Other people get to make different choices.

I started this piece by saying most people think "getting their chart done" is an experience that takes an hour or so. And I suppose if that's where it begins and ends for them ... well, it's better than nothing.

If it's done right, I'd have to say an hour or so of thought-provoking questions, discussion and the very brief analysis you can do of a Natal Chart in that tiny amount of time is at least a start toward something more meaningful.

But -- as they say -- all journeys of ten thousand miles start with the first step. And in that regard, "getting your chart done" can become a doorway into a territory of self-discovery whose exploration can last a lifetime and whose value is ultimately priceless.

For some, Astrology holds treasure that is literally worth its weight in diamonds, and when you find the connection between you and the self-understanding, the life understanding, the cosmic understanding it can provide, you may have found -- as I did -- the commitment of a lifetime.

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Astrology

What's It Worth to You?

By Rebecca Brents

When I first began to study Astrology, discussions of things like the Elements and Qualities, and the masculine and feminine signs, didn't interest me much. The stuff they talked about sounded too esoteric and abstract to hold my attention for any length of time.

As a cut-to-the-chase Aries, I wanted a heaping helping of meat on my plate so I could dig in and learn something useful. Something useful to me, that is ... and this stuff wasn't it. To my credit, I eventually came around and saw this subject differently. In my defense, it wasn't presented very well -- its value wasn't clearly drawn -- the first dozen or so times I hit it.

So, now that I'm the writer -- and the teacher -- let me try to do things differently -- and better -- with my efforts and with the time you and I both spend together.

I tell you now, there will be times when I'll need to talk about the metaphysical elements -- fire, earth, air and water, the physical components of life and the world we inhabit. Granted, if you're just beginning your study of occult disciplines -- such as tarot and astrology -- this probably sounds very vague and rarified to you -- just as it once did to me.

In Astrology, the elemental group a sign belongs to tells you something important about the way the people born in that sign approach and perceive life. This makes a huge difference in determining what's important to them, what they're build to accomplish and what they may want to do with themselves, their talents and their lives -- whether they consciously know it or not.

People spend a tremendous amount of time and energy trying to find out who they really are. Millions of people spend entire lives, in fact, not realizing that the matter of self-identify is the fundamental issue they need to address.

So they never even ask the question: "Who am I?" Some other questions may flit across their minds from time to time. "Why am I here? What am I good at? What's my mission in life? What do I want to be when I grow up? How can I get ahead? Where can I find someone to love me? Why can't I ever seem to catch a break?"

One of the most fundamental rights any human has is the right to be himself. But, as I sometimes ask rhetorically -- to anyone who will listen -- how can you live an authentic life? How can you be yourself if you don't know who that is?

The discovery that you don't have -- or have lost -- a firm grasp on your self-identity is one of the most stark and terrifying moments you may ever face. I remember the moment it happened to me, and how adrift and rudderless I felt. A person with no direction, no destination ... and no clue where I wanted or needed to go, let alone the means I needed to have to get there. There was no "there" for me at that moment.

I was like a traveler -- a driver, a sailor, a pilot -- journeying through the dead of night -- when suddenly my headlights and all my instruments I needed to steer my craft safely failed completely. I couldn't see the path ahead. I didn't know where "home" was. I had nothing remotely resembling a "purpose."

I even spoke the words aloud -- with more dismay and incredulity than I've felt for any realization before or since. "I don't know who I am." And before even the sound had a chance to

fade, I knew my first priority -- the thing I needed to do immediately and completely for myself ... was find out.

Fortunately, I'd already spent a lot of years studying Astrology -- as a hobby, as a lark, as a way to peek into the future and know vaguely whether there were good times or bad times ahead.

Now I needed Astrology -- and what I knew of it -- to help perform a minor miracle for me -- at a time when I was more desperate and frightened than I had been in my life ever. Somewhere I'm sure the Good Lord and a few angels were smiling, because Astrology can do that dance better than anything else I have yet discovered.

Astrology can help you learn who you are, how you were built to operate, what you came here to do -- to learn -- to work on -- more completely and lovingly than an entire library of self-help books ... or the finest therapist ever born. I am absolutely convinced of that. It can do it quickly. It can set you down perfectly in the context of your surrounding life.

The more you study, the more completely you learn this craft, the more you will understand about yourself -- and all the people around you, the more you will grasp the meaning behind what's going on in your life, what you need to do about it, how life is asking you to grow and where you're apt to come out when whatever you're dealing with is over -- and the next set of lessons lines up to start.

If that isn't worth a king's ransom in gold, then you and I have vastly different values -- and I'll let you get on with whatever it is you need to do instead and I'll step back into the stream of my own development, no questions asked, no judgment, no guilt, no hard sell ... and no hard feelings.

Let me know if you change your mind ... or, for your own sake, find someone else who can help you learn what you need to know. I promise it is probably the most fascinating bit of education you will ever undertake. I promise it will be worthwhile. I promise it will change you for the better. Beyond that, you'll have to try it for yourself.

It will answer questions you've wondered about all your life. It will answer questions you've never thought to ask. Pretty soon, you'll wonder how you ever got along without it. It will show you dimensions of life and worlds you never knew existed. It will define your place in the middle of it all. Astrology can do all that and more. I promise.

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Astrology

When it's time to stop blaming Life, Fate
and other people and start working on yourself
by Rebecca Brents

There are people who look for quick answers to the question of self-identity ... and superficial explanations for why they are the way they are. Some also look for something else -- something besides themselves -- to blame their problems on. Unfortunately, Astrology offers these people a whole lot of grist for the mill.

I've watched this happen a lot in my time, including with one of my relatives. Over the years, I've tried to work with her ... to educate and motivate her -- and I'm sad to say not much has come of it.

This person sure ought to know better by now, but with a Moon in Taurus, she's distressingly reluctant to give up anything that lets her take "the easy way out" of the quandaries she wrestles with, the fixes she makes with her own choices, the problems she sets up for herself -- and anyone else foolish enough to get involved.

I finally learned the only way to win at this game was not to play it ... and so she and I haven't spoken in over thirty years. But she's not the only one who tries to blame the stars instead of learning the details of her personality better and -- more importantly -- working to change some of her automatic responses (which set up these issues in the first place).

Since not every person on Earth falls into these particular potholes, it would seem she might be able to develop strategies and attitudes that will help her life flow a little better, provide more tolerance and insight into what's really going on here, and at least invite the chance for something calmer and easier to arrive. It would give her and everyone around her a break in the constant and continuing drama.

The trouble is ... painful as it is, she likes the turmoil. She's a Leo with the Sun in First House and Cancer Rising. She was born to be a drama queen. She feels valued and worthwhile when her family is all aflutter over her and embroiled in helping her "solve" her latest crisis. It doesn't matter if the unfolding plot of the story is always self-made and upsetting, if not tragic -- as long as she's the star of the show.

If you ask me, that's a sad way to get attention ... but even more sad is the unavoidable conclusion that this is what she knows, that she's learned to work these strategies to her dubious advantage very capably through the years, and she's not especially interested in learning new tricks that might -- no kidding -- actually improve things --- for her and everyone.

When it became clear that her actions created chaos for me, my life and my family, I decided for the sake of my own sanity that other people were going to get handed the supporting parts in this endless saga, and I've never regretted the choice.

She's been through a slew of other "helpers" since I let go of the post and moved on, and they become her victims as inevitably and as regularly as she finds reasons to blame her predicaments on "the stars."

If an advisor, including me, many, many times tries to point out it's her choices, her actions and her decisions that brought about this mess ... not some far-off influence from Mars, or Saturn or Pluto in some inauspicious place ... she honest-to-God acts like she doesn't hear a word.

For all practical purposes, she's been struck deaf. That line of dialogue doesn't fit in the script she's working with ... and so it's allowed to fade away, like some random, irritating sneeze in the audience -- until not even an echo remains.

Yes, it's one of the ways to misuse Astrology, and critics who fix on this as a reason to disapprove of this particular body of knowledge have a point ... and my sympathies. It's awfully easy to misuse Astrology this way and fall into the mindset of being a helpless victim of circumstances. But then you can misuse many conveniences we'd rather not do without.

Fire, automobiles, power tools, prescription drugs. In responsible hands, those things improve life. The same with Astrology. And people looking for things outside themselves to blame for the dilemmas that haunt their lives can find substitutes for the harsh patterns in their horoscopes and never come near Astrology's borders.

Astrology is a reflection, not a cause. The native ... the one who owns the horoscope is the cause. And he can help make life easier by being conscious of his choices and working deliberately with the sharp corners and rough spots of his personality ... or he can make things as tough as can be by pushing the problems in his make-up on himself, the people around him, the world at large -- and insisting that he can't help it. That's just the way he is.

But Mars square to the Sun doesn't hand you anger issues to manage and a flash-point temper to live with. It's not the cause of your troubles. It's because you don't deal well with frustration, because you turn to rage as your first response, and because you have some important things to learn about self-control that you *have* Mars square to the Sun in your horoscope in the first place ... as an unmistakable reflection that, yes, you are who you are.

Now the question is ... what are you going to do about it? Back when this pattern began, and here today and forevermore, you have choices. Live with this -- and deal with the consequences, which can be severe ... or do something to change it.

And when Saturn, moving through the present day sky, following its orbit, doing its thing, opposes your Natal Sun, it's not responsible for your extreme frustration. Saturn opposing your Natal Sun simply marks the time in your cycle of learning when the other people in your life are heavily, even unreasonably demanding, of you.

At the same time, they are *not there* for you in very important ways. They are either crushingly dependent on you, tangled up totally in their own "stuff" to handle, or absent completely ... unable to help you or handle their fair share of your current load and responsibilities in any way. They may even be the reason *why* you are coping with such crushing demands.

But from another perspective, when Saturn opposes your Natal Sun, the time has come for you to learn to handle serious life issues *on your own*. It may also be time for you to examine closely just *how much work and responsibility* you have assumed in your relationships ... and maybe make some adjustments.

Maybe it's time for you to be the adult in your relationships for a while. Maybe it's time you learned how to better stand on your own -- with very little help from any of your usual sources. Maybe it's time to assess how much you want to be ... or should be ... responsible for people who either can't or won't help handle the load your relationship demands.

There are plenty of questions to pose at this particular point in Life's journey ... and Astrology can illustrate and help you ask a lot of them. It's a life coach and counselor like nothing I have ever seen, because sometimes asking the right questions puts you well down the road to solving them.

Fortunately, the aspect I just described is one that happens only every 28 - 30 years. It's not an issue most of us will have to face -- and somehow cope with -- every day, day after day.

But it is a signal that in this particular phase of your development and evolution, the time has come to balance your ambitions and desires, your ego needs and self-assertion habits with the structures and directions your partners need to have for their highest good. And *their stuff* may not give you much help or support for your interests right this minute ... at all.

It's a time of learning to stand up to criticism, meet heavy responsibilities in your relationships, accept the structures -- and timing -- imposed by other people, arrange to "go it alone" rather than count on much assistance from outside yourself, and invest a great deal of work against serious resistance in order to make progress on your own evolution.

It's a test of your determination and independence. It's part of the creative cycle for every sign and for everyone at some point in life -- if you live long enough. In fact, if you live long enough you'll get to work with it two or three times -- and hopefully learn something about the role you and partners have for one another every single time.

But again, this is simply an element of life. It is not Saturn's fault. You are not Saturn's helpless victim. The planet roaming along hundreds of millions of miles away has not singled out you in particular to dump a load of grief and problems on.

Saturn the planet doesn't give a rat's ass about you or the conditions of your life. And it certainly is not out to do you harm. I promise you ... it doesn't even know you exist. Yet its position in the sky -- for reasons I don't pretend to understand -- somehow corresponds to this particular phase of your own creative growth -- and personal progress -- and all the increments of help and hindrance in between.

Its position at any time is simply an element of code we can use to decipher things about our lives and understand the workings of our world more completely. It gives us information about mysterious cycles of life we have yet to define -- or describe -- in any other way.

What astrologers know about these various phases and cycles can provide them -- and anyone who consults them -- with an absolute gold-mine of knowledge ... a convenience I would not hesitate to call miraculous.

Not to use it for the good it can offer seems absolutely crazy to me -- the same way a person would seem crazy not to use electricity because he doesn't understand why flipping a switch brings him light, heat and power to make his life better, safer and more comfortable.

You may not understand why electricity works. I'm told by people who ought to know what they're talking about that nobody understands exactly why electricity works ... what exactly it is that makes those electrons flow and behave as they do. But just as you can use electricity for wonderful benefits, you do have to know how to work with it -- whether you understand its exact mechanisms or not -- and you have to respect the "rules" by which it operates.

Otherwise, you can fry yourself into a crispy critter in no time flat. Is it electricity's "fault" if you shock the whey out of yourself? Or wind up electrocuted because you broke one of its absolute operating principles? I don't think so.

Electricity -- like Saturn -- doesn't care. It simply is. The responsibility of working with it properly ... is yours. Your safety is your job. And when you behave sensibly, learn what you need to know to be safe and respect what you can do with electricity's power -- or Saturn's authority, life for you can be much sweeter than if you fail to educate yourself, fail to act in your own best interests, or fail to observe the known limits of the situation.

You can learn about the parameters of these energy cycles ... and work with them as necessary and to considerable advantage ... or you can muck along in some blind or bull-headed fashion ... and maybe cause yourself a lot of unnecessary pain. The praise or blame for these choices is yours.

It's not something you can pass off and blame on other people. It's certainly not something you can blame on the positions of "the stars." Astrology is a body of incredible knowledge. So is physics. So is history. So is psychology. So is nutrition. What you do with any of these collections of wisdom ... and how you let them improve your mind, your character, your body, your relationships and your life -- is first, last and always -- up to you.

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Origins of an Idea

Horoscope ... 'The Watcher of the Hour'

By Celeste L. Walker

The roots of Western astrology -- the occult discipline many know at least casually, and many practice with dedication -- reach far back in time to origins in ancient Mesopotamia.

The early practice of what has become Astrology was mostly a study of celestial signs, omens seen in the positions of the stars ... but the conclusions (and predictions such as they were) gained from this was applied almost exclusively to the future and fate of society -- the fortunes of the group.

In those beginnings there was simply no way to break the information down to applications with meaning for individuals, nor was there much incentive to try.

The translation of celestial data into personal information began with the discovery of what has become the concept of the Ascendant sign, the fact that the different constellations of the Zodiac ... all twelve of them, rise in succession in the eastern sky (just like the Sun) and move across the heavens in a daily perpetual parade.

The notoriously mobile Moon travels through a new sign about every two and a half days, finishing a new circle of the Zodiac every month ... but every day, each ascending sign remains on that all important eastern horizon for only about 2 hours. In each 24 hour period, all twelve appear -- literally in rotation.

Thus the Ascendant is the most rapidly changing major point of reference in the modern horoscope. Based on this fact, and from the points of reference it provides, we can construct charts with enough difference during a single day to apply what we read there to an individual ... his life, his character, his future, his fate.

As the different constellations ascend ... and figuratively turn the wheel of the chart ... we can locate a particular moment of birth or the occurrence of another event, freeze the motion of the celestial bodies in their positions at that instant and translate the heavenly map onto paper -- in the circular graphic of a horoscope.

With that feature, Astrology becomes a tool for the study of the individual ... not just the cluster of all babies born on a certain day -- although a chart cast at sunrise -- with the Sun on the Ascendant does have applications when no birth time is available ... and does give valid information about the lives that begin that day.

Of course a beautiful point of Astrology is that in providing relevance on an individual plane ... its use as a forecasting device for historical cycles and the fate of nations remains true. Astrology encompasses the totality of life ... and life experience.

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Different Strokes for Different Folks

True Then ... True Now

By Celeste L. Walker

"Different strokes for different folks" became a cliché catch-phrase back in the late '60's and '70's. Yes, there was a kernel of truth in it ... and maybe it was supposed to be tolerant and light-hearted. But for some reason it always rubbed me wrong, as if the often serious differences between people (and there were a bunch of painful examples in those days) could be solved with a silly sentence, tossed off by someone as he headed off in another direction.

I suppose words thrown over someone's shoulder on the way out the door were better than a punch thrown at your head ... and it was a live-and-let-live sentiment, which you couldn't take for granted back then any more than you can today. But acceptance, though better than some alternatives, wasn't the same as understanding.

You might be granted the right to be peacefully different ... but the attitude of permission was careless, even grudging. It seemed to me folks in that framework didn't learn anything about one another. I think that's what offended me. Yes, the times were simpler then. And so was I.

The multi-textured rainbow of differences among people -- and the way a horoscope reveals the inner truths like a painting of the soul -- is one of the reasons Astrology fascinates me even more now than when I first started studying it seriously ... in those same '70's I mentioned.

Does my knowledge of Astrology enrich and sometimes ease the rocky road of relationships in my life? Oh, you bet it does. I can calmly watch people "being themselves" as I know them to be ... and I hope in most cases I have enough sense to adopt that "different strokes for different folks" state of mind ... and not try to change them, not insist that they try to be something they aren't, for my convenience. Or even theirs.

Sure there are still people I just can't stand ... even though I *understand* them lots better (I think) than they would like to believe. And I can see how they've taken the colors of their creation ... and turned it into a character all their own.

I've watched people take "difficult" astrological combinations and fashion something ... if not exactly "lovely" ... at least acceptable from challenging requirements within themselves. And I've watched other people work with essentially the same blend ... and come up with personalities that are just "in your face offensive" all the time.

That alone certainly proves my points, made here and elsewhere, about the exercise of free will as an important choice and fundamental element in anyone's horoscope.

And I've learned that one person "understanding" the dynamics of an exchange isn't enough to make a relationship work. And I've learned I don't always have to be the one who tolerates, copes, puts up with, and "gives" ... in an exchange with someone who just puts my teeth on edge.

Eventually, I can decide that "that combination done in this way" just isn't something I want to keep making room for in my life. Who knows, maybe it's kindness for both of us when I finally get to that point. It's certainly easier on the nerves.

I've noticed I'm usually the one who calls a halt to the arrangement. I've also noticed there don't seem to be squads of people waiting to take my place in the life of the one I'm sending off with a blessing and a hope that they find the help, comfort, companionship, kick in the pants, whatever

it is they need ... and are so unpleasantly seeking ... from someone else. Somehow. Someday. Somewhere. All I can say is ... it's just not going to be me any more playing that role. And that's where my responsibility ends. And that's where I think it should.

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Why Don't the Zodiac Signs Line Up

With the Regular Calendar Dates?

By Annabelle Leigh

This is an interesting question. You may have wondered about it, too. I certainly did before I became an Astrologer and learned the reasons for this strange discrepancy. Those reasons are complicated, and you may be sorry you asked before you get the answer, especially if you're not into geometry, astronomy or the other physical sciences and math most of us didn't care for in school.

But I will try to keep the explanation simple (notice I didn't say "short") and use everyday words, not because I think you need to be talked to in short sentences and one-syllable words, but because the answer asks you to form a mental model ... a picture in your imagination ... to "get" the concept behind the verbal explanation.

I also have to break the explanation into pieces and you'll have to knit them together so they make sense

Why doesn't Aries, the first sign of the Zodiac, begin along with the normal calendar on January 1 each year?

Implicit here is the fact that Astrology doesn't just randomly match personality traits with birthdays ... which it would if it were just the silly parlor-game superstitions some detractors claim. The normal calendar we use in the West is mostly an artificial imposition of order on a more-or-less convenient measure of time. A calendar year marks approximately the length of time it takes the Earth to make one complete orbit of The Sun.

But then, of course we get things like leap years and leap seconds because our chronometers now are much more accurate in dealing with time / space placements than they were back when the calendar was first being assembled by people long-lost in the dustbins of history.

There is, in fact, no reason why there should be twelve months in a year ... or why some months have 31 days while February is usually stuck with 28. The Moslem world, for instance, operates on a lunar calendar rather than a solar one ... and their months rotate backward through the year over time.

The Chinese also have their own beginning point for a new year that doesn't coincide with January 1. And so do the Jews. There's also no universal law for why "weeks" should be 7 days long. This is just how humans have historically imposed order on the important concept of time -- which does have its place in all our lives.

Once you understand the logic of the Zodiac signs -- and the way their succession describes the universal process of creativity itself, Aries, and the qualities associated with it and the people born when the Sun is in Aries, provides a logical "starting point" for launching a new year, one based on nature and science, not artificial structures.

The beginning of Aries also coincides with a definite, predictable astronomical event -- the vernal equinox, one of two days in the year when day and night are equal in length. Colloquially we know it as "the first day of Spring." After the vernal equinox, the days start becoming longer than the night-time hours until you reach the Summer Solstice ... the longest day of the year ... another of those astronomical events humans can measure, predict and pin-point.

In fact, some astrologers make a good case for starting the Zodiac progression with the Summer Solstice ... with the sign Cancer. And I can see arguments for starting each new year on Winter Solstice -- the shortest day of the year ... after which the days stop getting shorter and shorter ... and start to lengthen again -- arriving eventually at the perfect balance point -- the vernal equinox, that first day of Spring, around the 20th of March.

So the brief, plain-English answer to this part of the question ... why doesn't the beginning of the Zodiac correspond with the beginning of the familiar calendar and start on January 1 ... is: the people who devised the basic calendar Western civilization uses today didn't pay much attention to the natural inherent rhythms of life in putting their creation together.

The progression of the Zodiac, on the other hand, is absolutely aligned with this cycle and its concepts. The entry of the Sun into the sign of Aries is exactly what determines the start of a new Zodiac progression -- a Zodiac year. It occurs exactly with the beginning of Spring.

So ... it's the calendar that's out of step ... not the Zodiac. Thus, a better question might be ... why doesn't the calendar year begin on the first day of Spring? Why does the calendar year start basically "in the middle of nowhere?" (And why do we still stick with it ... now that we should know better??!!) For that answer, I guess you'd have to ask the long-ago folks who set these things up ... and the modern robots who keep it going.

For me, January 1 is just an arbitrary number ... a date on the calendar everybody decides to get all hopped up about. Personally, in my inner calculations, observances of psychological rhythms and spiritual practices, I give a lot more attention to those four divisions of the seasons:

- Spring, the vernal equinox ... the Sun enters Aries -- day and night of equal length and getting longer
- Summer, the Summer Solstice ... the Sun enters Cancer -- the longest day of the year
- Autumn, the autumnal equinox ... the Sun enters Libra -- day and night again of equal length and getting shorter
- Winter, the Winter Solstice ... the Sun enters Capricorn -- the shortest day of the year

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So, what determines when the Sun enters Aries

... and why isn't it the same day every year?

By Annabelle Leigh

The vernal equinox -- the moment when Spring officially arrives -- "is defined in astronomy as that point in space where the plane of the Earth's orbit around the Sun, the ecliptic, intersects the plane of the Earth's equator extended into space." (From "The Astrologer's Handbook;" by Frances Sakoian and Lewis Acker.)

This is where you need to construct that visual model in your imagination I mentioned earlier. Put the Sun in the center of the picture you're building in your mind and see the Earth rotating around it.

Now instead of seeing the rotating Earth as following the path of a ring around the Sun, see it as traveling on the outermost edge of a plane ... such as a phonograph record. If you follow the phonograph record analogy, the Sun is still in the center -- in the hole of the record -- and the Earth is still traveling in a circle around it, but there is a visually solid platform now between the two bodies instead of just blank, empty space.

Now, remember from your days of studying these subjects in school ... the Earth is not just rotating around the Sun, it's also spinning on its own axis ... moving like a spinning top in a circle around the Sun at the center of the Solar System.

The Earth is also tilted on its axis ... and as it both rotates on its axis and revolves around the Sun, there will come a point where the equator -- the imaginary circle around the middle of the earth that separates the Northern Hemisphere of the globe from the Southern Hemisphere --lines up exactly with -- intersects -- the plane of the ecliptic ... the "phonograph record" that we've postulated bridges the space between the Earth and the Sun. (See why I said you'd be sorry you asked?)

The moment this happens marks either the vernal (Spring) equinox or the autumnal (Autumn) equinox -- the days of the year where daytime hours and nighttime hours are equal in length.

When this occurs at the vernal equinox -- in the Spring, around March 19 - 21, depending on how "out of synch" calendar measurement is with solar / planetary movement -- the Sun moves from a position south of the equator ... as seen from Earth ... to a position north of the equator in its apparent motion along the ecliptic.

You may not have noticed this, but in the winter in the Northern Hemisphere, the Sun travels a line lower in the sky as it moves from horizon to horizon during the course of a day. This accounts in part for why winter days are shorter.

The Sun travels a line higher in the sky -- and thus has a farther distance to go -- in the summer. When the Sun hits its lowest point in the sky -- in late December in the Northern Hemisphere -- we've reached the Winter Solstice point. When the Sun hits its highest point in the sky -- in late June in the Northern Hemisphere -- we've reached the Summer Solstice point.

Astronomy and mathematics are able to determine the exact moment in the these things happen Astrology marks its major beginning points based on those positions and calculations.

Calendars, on the other hand, were built using much less precise, much more arbitrary standards, and so the slack between the two -- the discrepancies that seem so annoying and mysterious -- can be attributed to that.

The rock structures at Stonehenge in England and in Chaco Canyon in the United States seem to have been laboriously, meticulously constructed by ancient people to determine these essential points in yearly time -- the solstice points and equinoxes.

We can assume there were once cultures that paid close attention to these moments for their social rhythms, spiritual practices and commercial / farming / planting practices.

When you see what work they devoted to construct tools that would help them determine these precise moments in time, it's clear these were a big deal to them ... long ago.

In Astrology, and in the earth-based religions such as wicca, these days are still a big deal.

- Spring, the vernal equinox ... the advent of the Sun into Aries -- day and night of equal length and getting longer
- Summer, the Summer Solstice ... advent of the Sun into Cancer -- the longest day of the year
- Autumn, the autumnal equinox ... the advent of the Sun into Libra -- day and night again of equal length and getting shorter
- Winter, the Winter Solstice ... the advent of the Sun into Capricorn -- the shortest day of the year

Some pagan religions hold festivals on these days to celebrate their arrival -- in the same way Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter, and the Jews celebrate events like Passover and Hanukah in their culture, history and religious practices. And for Astrologers, these days mark the beginning of the Cardinal Signs ... signs whose energy marks a distinctive change of pace in the business of life and promotes action to acknowledge and support a new set of interests.

Aries, for instance, centers around the individual and the establishment of self-identity. Cancer centers around home and family interests. Libra centers around marriage and partnership concerns. Capricorn centers around public life efforts and community accomplishments.

The two signs that follow each Cardinal sign supports the focus and agendas of the Cardinal sign that precedes it in a natural fashion that gives Astrology its logic and structure.

But that's a topic for another time. For now ... this is why Astrology signs and calendar time are not synchronized ... and why even the beginnings of the signs themselves will differ from one year to the next and certainly why the times when these occur are widely divergent.

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Excerpt from
So What Does Compatible Mean to You?
Getting Along with the Zodiac Signs
By Rebecca Brents

Every astrologer hears the question: What signs am I compatible with? The person asking wants a list of three or four answers they can count on ... often to solve problems much larger than just a cluster of incompatible associates.

Some of the misapplications of astrology suggest there are such lists ... and easy answers. There aren't. In astrology, as in life, broad categories and generalizations ... may not be worth much. Also, a lot depends on what you want ... what "compatible" means to you.

True, there are signs who tend to think and act alike, whose orientation and values toward life share common ground, whose personalities support and sympathize with one another. This can indeed give you a head start on a satisfying relationship -- but there are no guarantees.

Intellectually, as an educated astrologer, I can sit here and tell you that all signs are crucially important, all signs are wonderfully unique, all people are composed of many different elements -- and categories can be dangerous.

As a practical matter and in the experience of my real life, though, I have to admit there is one sign I simply cannot get along with -- although Lord knows I've tried!! (No, I will not say what it is.)

On the other hand, every serious romantic partner I've ever had has been a Leo. Could there possibly be any relationship between the fact that Leo is a Fire sign ... and I have my Sun, Moon, and Ascendant all in Fire signs? I'm going to chicken out on that answer and let you be the judge.

If you learn about the Zodiac groupings that are assigned to the four components of physical reality -- Fire, Earth, Air and Water, those will tell you the basic qualities of each group and the differences in the signs they contain. Then you can decide which ones sound interesting and compatible to you.

To an astrologer, Fire, Earth, Air, and Water are called the Elements or Triplicities -- as each contains three signs of the Zodiac. Traditionally, members of the same triplicity tend to get along well with one another.

(There are also the Qualities ... or the Quadruplicities: Cardinal, Fixed, and Mutable ... whose members tend to have "problems" with one another. But that's the subject of a future article.)

The Fire signs are Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius. The Earth signs are Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn. The Air signs are Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius. The Water signs are Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces.

Fire signs and Air signs are considered masculine, positive, assertive, active, outgoing, and motivating. They tend to do things, stir things up, take action, go after what they want, make things happen, initiate situations ... rather than waiting for opportunity to find them and start banging on the door.

These signs -- in their uncorrupted form -- are self-motivating, even aggressive in their approach to life.

Earth signs and Water signs are considered feminine, passive, reactive, receptive, introverted, and enduring. They attract experiences and "take advantage of opportunities" rather than creating circumstances independently. Though capable of acting forcefully, they often prefer to "wait and see what happens" before making any moves.

They prefer to work with and build on the raw materials at hand rather than exploring new horizons or conquering new situations.

Their strength often lies in their ability to sustain themselves -- rather than promote themselves, or call on their alliances -- and they prefer passive aggression and passive resistance to the conflict and direct confrontation preferred by the Fire and Air signs.

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Sometimes ... a Great Notion

By Rebecca Brents

It's a common phenomenon ... or a common problem, depending on your view. People attract the same type of person into their lives, into their relationships, over and over again.

Some women, for instance, will go from one abusive man to another ... as if they were cursed with magnetic attraction for such people, as if they literally had a psychic sense about who will wind up hitting, berating, insulting, or belittling them ... and who won't.

If such a woman has a friend who "fixes her up" with a date whom everybody knows is a nice guy, a wonderful person, a sensitive, caring human being who's also looking for a partner ... they'll inevitably find one another boring, claim they have nothing in common, say there's just no spark, no chemistry. The date fizzles, sputters, and everybody goes home early ... and alone.

But just let this same woman meet a guy standing in line at the grocery store who is guaranteed to run the abuse games on her one more time, and magically, between the chewing gum and the checkout stand, she'll have wangled a way to give him her phone number, set up a tryst for next Saturday ... and off she goes again.

Once more ... she's in love!! Like a lock in a key, the abuser somehow fits what she wants in a partner, and instinctively she knows it.

Psychologists talk about patterns, neurotic need fulfillment, and imprinting behaviors. The rest of us call it "making the same mistake all over again."

And if you've ever tried to talk someone who's into this sad cycle out of it ... by pointing out the tell-tale signs of heartbreak down the road, the history of busted relationships the guy drags in his wake, his criminal record, the restraining order his ex-wife has out against him, the kinds of "friends" he hangs with, and the fact that the guy gives "normal people" the creeps ... you might as well save your effort.

She's sure she can fix him. She's sure he's just misunderstood. And you know how the chorus goes ... and how this song is going to end.

For some reason, this seems to be a trait more of women than men, although I know men aren't immune. Maybe women just talk about their issues more freely. Maybe I just know more of them. Maybe (almost certainly!!) women come to an astrologer more readily, more eagerly, than men.

There is a wonderful line in a movie I saw years ago ... and I wish I could discover it again. Two older men -- cowboy types I think -- are talking together and one tells the other, "Women aren't like us you know. Women will love anything. Biggest jerk in the world's got some woman crazy about him."

And I shake my head and mutter softly at the memory every time ... "Ain't it so!" The woman in me looks with dismay at what some other women tolerate and define as "love."

In my adult life I have never once been hit, shoved, kicked, slapped, punched, knocked down, or thrown against a wall. (Ok ... my childhood is another story, and that itself should have set me up for a lifetime as a battered woman. It didn't. Maybe it's the Aries in me ... and, I guess there's no "maybe" about it.)

On the other hand, the astrologer in me looks at the patterns in a person's chart ... and sees something else. The reason why someone attracts problem partners again and again and again. What she's trying to do? What she's trying to learn? What the messages are in her head that she's trying to either satisfy or silence.

Is this a Karmic problem? Is this a "father" problem? Is this a "self-esteem problem"? Is this because she's disowned her own violent and angry feelings ... and along with that she's cut away her capacity for self-defense?

I have seen it help immensely for someone to hear from the mouth of a perfect stranger reading the cryptic symbols in that circle on a piece of paper the reasons why she's doing what she's doing ... and what she's trying to do with the choices she makes again and again and again.

Maybe it's too much to expect some kind of miracle healing from a simple gift of information ... because these innate patterns are heart-breakingly powerful and those old familiar feelings do come alive again, even unwanted, in the presence of "the right kind of person."

But if someone can step back long enough to remember something like ... "I'm trying to find the perfect love, which, by definition doesn't exist."

Or "I'm trying to get over the fact that my father was angry and distant and never had time for me."

Or "I have terrible problems expressing anger, because those emotions feel so dangerous and powerful. So I team up with people who will be angry, violent, dangerous, and powerful for me ... and then I don't have to deal with or take responsibility for that."

Or, "I'm afraid to let people get too close. So I pick out people who will show me how right I am to feel that way." Then, by simply defining the problem, she's got power over it.

She can decide what to do next with more deliberate resolve than if she just let the emotional dominoes fall in their old familiar way ... and plunged blindly, hopefully, into another relationship destined to become just another mess.

She knows what "key" she's looking for to fit the "lock" she wears around her heart ... and if she's able to define "love" differently for herself than she does automatically, she's got a chance to break the pattern ... perhaps faster, cheaper, and more easily than spending years in therapy.

The "a-ha!!" experience of emotion and reaction will tell her if the analysis is right. It literally "strikes a chord" ... and the reaction can be stunning and dramatic. It helps you believe in the power of the words, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free."

Sometimes it happens. Not always, I agree. People still get to make their own choices. And the power to make the right choice means you also have the power to keep on making the wrong one.

But knowing more than you did when you arrived here does make it harder and harder to keep playing yourself for a fool. You understand it's not "Fate" that keeps you shackled and sad, it's habit. Perhaps the habit of many lifetimes. And if you want different habits, different outcomes, different experiences ... you have to start somewhere.

Armed with information, sometimes people decide to live differently. Sometimes they decide to change.

Sometimes they make it happen.

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Salad, Steak, or Sushi?

What Your Sun Sign Says About the Way You Eat
by Rebecca Brents

Each segment of the Zodiac takes a unique approach to life ... and the business of food is certainly a major part of living. Some want "food on the run." Others want to linger over the lovely creations of nouvelle cuisine.

Some are strictly steak-and-potatoes. Others would trade it all for a great gooey dessert. Some consider tofu to actually be an edible substance. So, here, with a light-hearted look at folks and food are some suggestions that match Astrological personalities and preferences.

Aries: Where there's a buffet table, smorgasbord, or picnic table full of treats, Aries Rams want to be first in line. It's not that they're worried others will eat everything in sight, it's that they have no patience. At all. None.

They like their food spicy, hot, and here now!! They are famous for their instantaneous appetites. They weren't hungry ten minutes ago, but now they are!! What's quick? What's convenient? What's close?

They love fast food, hors-d'oeuvres, snacks, and anything that tastes great right out of the carton. Italian, Mexican, Szechuan Chinese, Indian curry, whatever has enough pepper and spice to bite back will certainly have them coming around for seconds! But serve up something bland and tasteless, and you won't see them for dust.

Taurus: Taureans fall into two categories: the meat-and-potatoes crowd, for those who like the solid, substantial, earthy foods that build the famous, well-padded Taurus physique, and those who are into luxury, sensuality, and richness. Although these folks, too, will want nourishing food and plenty of it, they opt for the calorie-filled packaging and accompaniments.

Rich, creamy sauces are especially favored, as are foods made with real butter and real sugar. Nothing artificial or low-cal for the Bulls who want to pamper themselves. None of them can resist a hot-fudge sundae with all the trimmings or good old American apple pie a la mode. They'll worry about the extra pounds ... well, maybe tomorrow. And then again ... maybe next month.

Gemini: Gemini wants variety. Did I mention a buffet line a minute ago? That's the Gemini epicure's idea of paradise. They'll wander through getting a sample of this, a smidgen of that, put down their first plate and go back for a second one.

They may not finish anything. They've got this short attention span, you see. But they'll have tasted it all ... and finagled a recipe for what really appeals to them.

In doing so, they'll have talked over past meals and variations on the theme with the person writing down the list of ingredients, and maybe promised to exchange a few of their own favorites "as soon as they get home." They'll forget, of course. Or get busy.

And it may be years before they make the new recipe themselves. If ever. But they've added to their collection. They "have the technology." They'll never be bored. And for Gemini, that's what counts. Besides, they've got other things to do. See ya later.

Cancer: The kitchen is Cancer's favorite room in the house. Most of them are wonderful cooks, because a lavish meal, prepared with heart and soul is one of their best-known ways of showing love. They love feeding others ... and they love being fed.

Whatever's wrong in a Cancer's world ... they think food is the answer. It solves all problems, fortifies against all calamities, heals all illness ... perhaps because food is love to these folks. And love itself cures all things.

Perhaps the real secret here, though is the love Cancers put into the meals they serve: the homemade bread, the chicken soup made from scratch, the custard they baked from milk, sugar, and eggs ... using their great-grandmother's family recipe.

And unless something they serve will literally make you break out in hives, you'd better eat it, too. Hurt a Cancer cook's feelings and you'll never hear the end of it. Worse, she'll try to feed you again.

Leo: Leos are less apt to be found in the kitchen than at the fanciest, most expensive restaurant in town ... where they can be seen (and admired) in all their designer finery and where other diners can admire the meal they've selected -- and maybe wish they had the taste, wherewithal, or foresight to have arranged such a masterpiece. (You didn't know a simple dining experience could be so dramatic, did you?)

They want the good stuff, the expensive stuff, the stuff of dreams and luxury. What's fit for a king is good enough for a Leo. Champagne, caviar, truffles, pate, smoked oysters, and anything served flambe. Anything that can be imported had better be imported, or Leo will dine elsewhere next time ... where the establishment takes pampering its clientele seriously.

And if a Leo ever does prepare a meal for you with his or her own two hands ... it's being done so you'll notice it!! You'd better rave about it for months. Hurt a Leo chef's feelings ... and he's put a Cancer's paltry pouting in the shade once and for all!

Virgo: Save yourself some grief. Let Virgos do the cooking. They like to stay busy and they love to feel they've been of use. They'll fuss, and dice, and measure, and fret over portion amounts, and read the ingredients' labels. (It'll keep them out of your hair for a while!!)

And they won't ask you to help with anything because you can't do it well enough to suit them. They're better off doing it themselves, in the first place, like they always do

Go ahead ... run. Because after all the fretting about vitamin content, allergic reactions, and fiber ratios ... they'll serve up a meal that tastes like it is the package, like they kept the cardboard and threw away the contents.

It'll be nutritious, all natural, whole-grain, sugar-free, salt-free, organically grown, full of tofu, brown rice, and green veggies, and won't have come within 500 miles of any preservatives. And you'll spend the meal being oh-so-grateful they won't let you help with the clean-up ... 'cause you can get to some junk-food before the drive-ins close.

Libra: Leos may think they wrote the book when it comes to great adventures in food. HA!!! The tables set by Libras are among the finest in the world ... not just in terms of yummy nourishment artfully prepared, but meals offered in circumstances magnifique!!

Fresh flowers in the centerpiece, candlelight, china in an exquisite Oriental pattern, polished silver, real cloth napkins, soft music for "atmosphere." These are the elements of a dinner-time entre in the fine and cultured world of a Libra soul.

Add to that great intellectual conversation, a charming companion attentive to your every need, and elegant portions of both main course and desserts-a-deux ... and ooh, la, la. It could make the dinner hour the happiest part of the day.

A Libra cook will find a new presentation for your favorite dish so fine you will barely recognize it beneath the loveliness. And when Virgo runs you out of the kitchen with warnings not to return 'til you're called ... go find yourself a Libra. To them the teamwork of preparing a meal ... any meal ... is more than half the fun.

Scorpio: "Food as nourishment" is not a big item in Scorpio's world. But "food as mystery" ... ah, that's something else again!! What is that savory seasoning, that strange, unrecognizable ingredient, the origin of this particular dish?

Scorpio will love puzzling over that question. And being such daredevils at heart, you can say, "Here, taste this" with just about anything -- and they will. Risk and reward could be one in the same.

But don't ask one to reveal a secret recipe unless you're prepared to stumble home with a Ginsu knife slipped covertly between your ribs, nudging some tender piece of your innards with each step. To Scorpio, secret knowledge is power ... and as for his sense of humor, well, you just don't want to know.

While you'd better heap lavish praise on a Leo chef, you don't want to do that with a Scorpio. He'll wonder if you didn't think he had it in him to produce something edible and fine. This is not a good thought to plant in the mind of someone who reads true crime as a hobby ... unless you can detect the subtle spice of strychnine on that éclair he hands you with a smile.

Sagittarius: If you think Aries is an adventurous diner, you haven't seen Sagittarius in action. Exotic dishes from far away lands are mother's milk to these wanderers on the far horizon.

While French, German, and Japanese cuisine will be foreign food to some signs, Sagittarius will be keen to sample Tibetan, Moroccan, Peruvian, Swedish, Latvian, and anything else that hasn't been channeled into the mainstream yet.

Objectively Sagittarius may not believe "you only live once," but he'll certainly eat as if he does. Despite his well-known love of athletics and games, Sagittarius is also known for excess in all things. Food is no exception. So when I say his eyes are often bigger than his stomach ... that's not a toothless metaphor!

He will always bring his hearty appetite to the dinner table, however, and regale the guests with well-told stories interlaced with his famous humor. Keep him listed in your address book. He's usually worth the trouble.

Capricorn: This sober, conservative sign is not into frills of any kind. Something economical, plain, and palatable that sticks to the ribs is more than enough to satisfy his appetite.

He won't even opt for whipped cream on his slice of pie if it costs an extra nickel. He'd rather have the nickel, thank you, since he's always saving for a rainy day and the rumble of distant thunder is like white noise in his ears.

He'll eat left-overs without complaint ... and keeps the most Spartan cupboard you'll ever see. He buys groceries in bulk and on sale ... and may not know what he's actually accumulating until he gets home and unloads the shopping bags. Price ... and a long shelf-life ... are his considerations.

You'll rarely find him in a ritzy restaurant unless he's there as someone's guest ... and when time comes to grab the check, he'll stand well clear so as not to get caught in the crush. For this reason he loves business dinners with Leos ... because they always pick up the tab, and with just a little finesse and fudging he can still write the whole thing off on his taxes.

Aquarius: There is nothing conventional about this sign when it comes to eating habits, tastes, preferred food combinations, or daily schedules. He'll want to eat when he's hungry no matter what the clock says ... and chow down on what he's got a taste for, not just "whatever's around."

If you're not sure something really qualifies as food ... or if it should be edible, Aquarius will have a bite and give you an opinion. The guy who came up with chocolate covered ants was either an Aquarius ... or tried the confection out on one.

He also loves gadgets, toys, and clever little appliances. The rotary apple-peeler, the cherry pitter, the gizmo that lets you separate an egg by dropping the yolk in a cup, whatever it is that makes curly-fries -- probably had their origins in the mind of some ingenious Aquarian.

He may not actually cook much ... but he'll love playing with the Cuisine-Art. And if he insists that crinkle-cut cucumbers really do taste different, let it go. That's not an argument you're going to win.

Pisces: You may have to remind a Pisces what food is all about. She's usually not focused here in physical reality, so the maintenance of material substance doesn't register with her the way it does with all the other signs. If there were a way to eat with just vitamin pills and fruit juice, she'd opt for that in a minute.

Pisces hates the idea of causing pain; her mission in life is to heal that, after all. So at the very least, she'll be a vegetarian -- or feel guilty because she's not. But she'll also fret about the studies that suggest plants, too, react to the pain of "harvesting."

There is a strange religious sect called the Breatharians who claim to subsist on oxygen alone. It's the kind of mystical and oh-so-spiritual idea that would appeal to Pisces, who is apt to believe that if faith can move mountains, this should be a cinch.

Practicality is not a strong suit with Pisces. Neither is consistency. The science that postulates plants feel pain is the same science that says people will die without food to eat, but Pisces will blithely pick and choose the beliefs on which she bases her life. They don't have to be sensible.

I know what you're thinking ... but, no, not all Pisceans are blond.

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