



space, air, fire, water, earth

The five great elements that make up our bodies and our world have a tremendous impact on our energy, feelings, and thought patterns. Do you pay attention to them?

We have this saying in Ayurveda:

(India's ancient medical system & yoga's sister science)

Like Increases Like

If it's a hot summer day and you jump in a hot tub, you're not gonna cool down. Right? hot + hot = hotter.

It's a common sense concept. But we don't always think about it. If you want to change something (your anxiety for example), you need to consider how much time you spend practicing anxiety. I realize you probably don't mean to be practicing anxiety... But you've built the habit of it and it just happens now. If you want to change the habit of anxiety you have to practice the opposite. You have to practice not-anxiety. But how?

This is where the 5 elements are useful because you can't just force away a difficult emotional pattern (we've all tried though right?). Ayurveda lumps the elements together to create what's called a dosha (the elemental constitution of something or someone). It works like this:

air + space = vata dosha

fire + water = pitta dosha

earth + water = kapha dosha

Anxiety is most often considered to be an imbalance of vata dosha—meaning there's too much air and space. But it can also surface as a pitta dosha imbalance—too much fire.

Try this Balancing Practice:

Notice when you're ungrounded—when anxious thoughts are swirling around your mind like leaves in a windstorm. Or when your anxious thoughts are filling you with overwhelming pressure or heat.

Intentionally cultivate the opposite. What can you do? If you're ungrounded, hold a rock. Feel (or imagine) your feet on the earth. If you're overwhelmed by pressure, tune into the fluidity of water. Bring something cooling into your life (room temperature peppermint tea, or a walk in the shade of the forest, etc). **If one element feels too strong in any given moment, what opposite element can you cultivate to gently balance it?**

Everything—absolutely everything—is made up of space, air, fire, water, & earth.

You were born with a particular elemental constitution—your dosha (an Ayurvedic practitioner can help you figure out which one). But it's not just you. Everything is made up of the elements. This effects how you feel at different times of your day, your year, and your life. As you tune into the elemental energy within & around you, you'll be able to better cultivate balance in your life. You can learn to work with, rather than against, the energetic elements at work in the world.

The Elements & Doshas	Earth & Water (Kapha)	Fire & Water (Pitta)	Space & Air (Vata)
Time of Day	6-10am & 6-10pm	10am-2pm & 10pm-2am	2-6pm & 2-6am
Time of Year	Late Winter and Spring	Summer	Fall & Early Winter
Time of Life	Birth — Adolescence	Early adult — midlife	Mid-life — Death

Here's an example—

Because anxiety is usually an imbalance of vata dosha (air and space) you would balance it by adding grounding, earth elements to your life.

- Maintain a daily routine (don't be a leaf blowing in the wind!)
- Eat three meals a day at a consistent time
- Eat warm, cooked foods. Avoid cold, raw foods. Drink room temperature or warm beverages.
- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
- Practice slow, grounding yoga postures (as opposed to fast, frenetic types of exercise filled with the air element).
- Watch your breathing habits (the ultimate in understanding air!). Learn to breathe quietly. Easefully. Don't hyperventilate and stress breathe (heavy, audible, rapid, centered in the chest, vata imbalancing, anxiety causing)
- Give yourself a daily oil massage with organic sesame oil (not toasted).
- Keep a rock in your pocket to help your remember the earth element. Build a rock altar on your desk at work or in your home.
- Place a sand bag or heavy blankets over your belly or body in a reclined posture to help you feel supported and connected to the earth.