

## Using Astrology to build Calm, Peace, and Compassion

People turn to astrology for many purposes. Some want answers to existing questions. Where did I leave those keys? How can I build a better relationship with my boss? Other questions presuppose disaster -- how will I ever survive that upcoming Pluto transit? The list is long, and generally aimed at some kind of damage control to ourselves.

Astrology has so much more to offer to us. In this article I would like to focus on the question: How can we bring more calm and peace and compassion into our lives (and by extension, into the lives of those around us)? Since we tend to think in terms of opposites (the nature of duality) let's take a look at the opposite of calm, peace, and compassion.

- UN-CALM = I feel like one big knot of tension. And I feel off balance. Just about anything can push me over the edge. I'm too tired to keep holding the tension, and I'm too afraid to let go of the tension (I would feel completely vulnerable if I let my guard down, no matter how ineffective it might be).
- UN-PEACE = Who and what can I trust? I feel so alone. I feel like it is my personal responsibility to create all future security (without any outside help -- not from other people, not from the universe) for myself and those close to me. I can do my part, but I feel worn-out, and the task remains un-accomplished. (Ultimately I cannot prevent death, or the process of dying. I cannot even prevent suffering. And I feel afraid.)
- UN-COMPASSION = At best, I am sorry for your pain -- but my true feeling is that I am glad it is not my pain, at least not this time. At worst, I hate you and feel you deserve to suffer -- it is fun watching your pain.

How can astrology help us? As always we will look first towards our own natal charts, and second towards the current universal energy patterns on offer. House 1 through 6, in any natal chart, is about ME. Who am I? What do I like or dislike? How do I communicate? Etc. The guideline we will use here is to learn how to avoid wasting energy in each of these houses. House 7 through 12 tells us about our interactions with others. The guideline we will use here is to learn how to avoid acting out negative emotions in each of these houses (almost always at someone else's expense).

In my own experience it is generally better to look at an axis connecting two opposing houses than it is to consider each of those houses in isolation. So let's begin.

### Houses 1 / 7 Relationship axis

In the first house we build our self-image, and we build our masks. The job of a mask is to emphasize those parts of ourselves that we wish others to focus on, and to de-emphasize whatever we do not wish others to see. Masks are a protective device, or at least start out that way. Masks can get in the way. The first house is a place to continually explore who we might be, or become -- i.e. what my birthright is as a human being and what my specific circumstances will allow. Predefining ourselves with a mask can become problematic. Fighting against our true nature always wastes energy.

House 7 is where we present ourselves, and our masks, to another. We both want recognition, respect, trust, fairness, and truth from each other. Masks may help us to smooth over more superficial relationships -- but they can present obstacles in more personal and important relationships. Intimacy means touching another human being, and not just their mask. If we feel locked out, all kinds of negative emotions come into play. Calm, peace, and compassion are not the result. NOT acting out these negative emotions can go a long way towards helping to create the kind of relationship that we really want.

Note: Not acting out negative emotions is not the same thing as allowing others to push us around. Take care of business -- but without the anger.

### House 2 / house 8      Survival axis

The second house is where we stockpile what we feel we anticipate needing for this journey through life. We collect a lot of 'stuff' along the way. 'Travel light' does not often come naturally -- but it is much easier to maintain. Pluto transits will generally let us know what and how and where to get rid of excess 'stuff'.

Much of what we collect is material (ex. a broken toaster that might be fixable, snow tires from a car traded in years ago). Much of what we collect is emotional (ex. a memory of being snubbed at a New Year's party in 2006, an argument with a loved one that cannot be taken back). Consider the energy we waste dusting broken toasters and re-living, in our imagination, a miserable moment from a party 10 years ago. Heed the call of Neptune -- let go, let go, let go -- a great way to stop wasting energy in this house.

House 8 guides our major transformations and rites of passage. The challenge is to face truth, and welcome truth, head-on. No procrastinating, or equivocating, or making excuses. A tall order. But just about everything else pushes us into some negative emotional space, no matter how subtle (i.e. unnoticeable to ourselves). It may help to look at an example.

When was the last time we were asked to admit that we were wrong -- and knew that we were wrong -- but could not bring ourselves to say so out loud when asked to do so? This is generally followed by our disgust at our own reaction (or lack of action) to an unwelcome event that crossed our path. Negative emotions are freely flowing. It's very hard to resist sharing the misery. And yet, that is exactly what we need to do. We cannot control what we feel, but we can, and need to, control what we act out.

### Houses 3 / 9      Communications axis

The third house is where we develop our habitual ways of presenting ourselves, or communicating, to the outside world -- our speech patterns, writing style, general clothing choices, walking gait, style of handshake. To name just a few. This is also where we learn how to put 'spin' on things.

As we mentioned when discussing the first house, we build masks to highlight our strengths and hide our weaknesses. We need to note that every self-perceived weakness engenders a feeling of inadequacy, and feelings of inadequacy eat energy. A subsequent energy drain happens when we begin to believe that the mask is the reality -- i.e. there is no spin; the mask is the real us.

The ninth house is where we reach out and initiate interchange with groups of people. We share our insights (via art forms, lectures, writing books, ..), we share our priorities (working on legislative committees, contributing to tax code reforms, helping to rebuild derelict houses, ..), we share our enthusiasms (organizing 5K races, ..), and we share our own persona (you'd better believe that this mask that I worked on so hard on is the real ME).

Are we adored, are we ignored, are we shouted down? In the ninth house the content of what we communicate is becoming more important than the fine points about the communicator, me. It's the message, not the messenger. But we messengers want recognition and reward. An obvious setup for negative emotions to run riot.

### Houses 4 / 10      Family axis

The fourth house is about learning from history and bringing the past forward, hopefully in a positive way. We learn by listening to the stories and feelings of our family members. We are conditioned by the habitual patterns and behaviors and attitudes around us. The fourth house is about our personal history -- the habits developed in us as we grow, and then the consequences of these habits, as we journey through life.

How can we guard against wasting energy in the fourth house? An acid test to help us avoid wasted energy is noticing the repeated scenes we keep replaying in our imagination -- ex. poor me, poor me, or, daydreams of 'getting even'. Plan to increase personal competence! Bemoaning obstacles, and fantasizing revenge, is wasteful.

In the tenth house we seek practical applications for our own habit patterns (i.e. our attitudes, and convictions, and beliefs, and behaviors) in the greater outside world. The tenth house is often associated with career because we are looking for activities in life where our established habit patterns fit in. Career choice is near the top of this list of activities. Of course all our talents and strengths and weaknesses have a bearing on the work that we finally do. But those same talents and strengths and weaknesses have had a bearing on the development of our habit patterns all along.

When we act out negative emotions in the presence of others (always the case in the tenth house), someone gets hurt. Thus the guideline becomes 'do no harm'. So, how can we guard against creating pain and suffering, consciously or unconsciously, in the tenth house? Public displays of power, at any level, are tenth house associations. Beware of the fear of losing power. Unimaginable harm is done when someone prioritizes protecting personal 'status', at any cost, above prioritizing the growth of 'calm, peace, & compassion'. Leadership requires getting the job done; personal aggrandizement of the leader is not the central objective.

#### Houses 5 / 11 Creativity axis

The fifth house is where we tap into sources of inspiration, and respond with our own creativity. Earth, air, fire, water. We each approach this quest in distinctive ways. Earth energy may cultivate the land and feed the hungry. Air energy may create poetry, and language, and the next step in modern technology. Fire energy may train forces to protect emerging civilizations, and prepare first responders at home. Water energy may create art, and music, and new pathways into the unknown and into the unconscious. As always, checking the balance of energies in our own charts is immensely helpful.

Energy is wasted when we insist on 'being productive', but are really too tired to do the work that creativity demands. So we turn to distractions, and pretend that we are actually being productive. Note: For many of us feeling productive somehow legitimizes our existence. These feelings tell us that we are not wasting time -- which can be the opposite of what is happening.

The eleventh house is where we merge with and support the creative outpourings in each other. Friendship is an obvious example. Friendship extended to the global community is an ideal. Harm is done (via the acting out of negative emotions) when we stifle creativity in others. 'Do it my way! Exclusively!' This is the usual stifling method of choice.

#### Houses 6 / 12 Service axis

The sixth house is where we become active caretakers of our own being, our property, and our path. Healing woundedness in ourselves, and in any that cross our path, is central to the sixth house. The skills of the caretaker (i.e. the skills of the decent, responsible, grown-up, human being) come to the fore. The ability to nurture is primary among these skills. Thus so many sixth house mythologies are expressed in terms of nurturing the harvest.

Energy is wasted when we refuse to grow up. Energy is also wasted when we internalize negative 'stuff' directed against us. We cannot control (or suppress) feelings and / or thoughts. But we can choose to control what we act out.

The twelfth house is where the parts of ourselves that come with the human package, but are not particularly nurtured and supported by society, are given free-er reign. These include extra-sensory capabilities, which most commonly let us know about their existence through instances of deja-vu, or dreams, or premonitions. Learning how to navigate various meditative states helps us to distinguish

between psychic and spiritual awareness. More importantly, deep meditation teaches us how to use these, also human, faculties.

How can we minimize acting out negative emotions in this twelfth house? The best way is to go to that quiet space in the core of our being, where we can choose to act instead of react. But that, of course, is both an ideal and an on-going process. However, there are no wasted efforts here. So keep trying.

It is my personal conviction that in order to build calm and peace and compassion in the outside world we must first build these qualities in our own personal lives -- each one of us individually. If enough of us accomplish enough, along these lines, it will begin to make a difference. I wish each and every one success in this endeavor.

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