

# FOWLER'S PHASES OF FAITH AND THE 5 ELEMENT METAPHORS

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We use a variety of different models of reality when we use Touch For Health (TFH) or other Kinesiology as methods of improving performance or having more personal bests. Each of these models entails certain assumptions and ideas which we believe to be true, even though we may not be conscious of these beliefs.

We may not recognize our faith in the assumptions of our own world-view as faith. We might want to simply call it "Reality". We might just say, "that's just how life is." When I use the word faith I want to define it as the process by which we each construct our personal world-view, the set of beliefs which allow each of us to have meaning in our lived lives. We all strive to know about our world and understand it, but the human being cannot know everything. We cannot even contemplate everything that we do know in the same moment.

So we construct conceptual models which make sense of our experiences. Our belief in the truth of our model is our faith. This faith is different for each person and changes with the model we are using for making meaning out of the present circumstances. The various phases in the cycle of life have correspondingly different faith assumptions and different models of what is real and allows meaning and understanding. These phases are cyclical, like nearly everything else.

The five element model of faith is looked at in nine ways as seen on the TFH chart, which was taken from my interpretation of the Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan and Indian models of reality and my personal model based on naturopathic and chiropractic understandings. I am working on understanding how more meaning can be brought into an individual client/student/patient life and with more meaning more health/wholeness.

Assessment balances will help you understand what could be the major energy blockage at the moment, which is interfering with the ability to reach the desired goal. The individual muscle assessment and correction and relating the possibility of the five element metaphor to the person in relationship to the goal is another model for understanding where there is conflict in the individual energy/ personal environment/life force/innate intelligence and the ultimate environment/chi/ki/universal intelligence.

In our seeking wholeness we are in different phases of faith development and since these phases are cyclical we can be in any one of them for the goal which we are seeking. Our continued development can be blocked because of the stage of faith development needed for that goal is blocked by our world-view for that goal.

Faith is related to our image of what is real for us in our own world-view. We store nearly all our knowing in images, which relate to our five senses and our intuition, our feelings about it, a representation of the state of affairs in relation to the particular goal. Faith is our ability to be sensitive to the stimuli of our internal images which are both conscious and unconscious. Our beliefs in what is the ultimate environment, the final reality and our ability to celebrate our coming to terms with our personal understanding of this ultimate environment is our faith. Our faith is relational not only cognitively, it involves what our image is of the ultimate environment and is very personal. This understanding is not often spoken to in the healing process of the "scientific community." In TFHK we do much of what is done as in all other healing arts based on our faith in the model which we are using to help others.

Scott Lownsdale has recently outlined J.W. Fowler's *Stages of Faith Development* in the Spring issue of *Psychology and Theology* Vol 125, #1. Fowler describes seven stages of faith development which can be condensed into five phases which correspond quite well with the five element metaphors. When we are using muscle testing to indicate an imbalance or inhibition in the flow of meridian energy, we can consider whether the corresponding "phase of faith" is significant for our current balancing goal. A blockage in the corresponding element would indicate a possible faith issue that is important for achieving what the person believes that they want. This is a way to use TFHK to pay attention to the Soul, which includes everything about the whole person, including belief and faith.

It's important to be conscious of faith, as a vast majority of the U.S. population (90%) believe in a divine being and one third of the population describes their belief as a "strong conviction". In order to help people, we need to have some awareness and respect for their world-view. Even if a person is an atheist, or believes there is no greater spiritual force at work in life, this also constitutes a belief and faith which is a significant factor in how he or she will see and experience life. One's belief in what is possible, and the limits of existence, one's vision of the "ultimate environment," has a profound impact on the experience of life and the fulfillment of potential.

Fowler's stages of faith are based on the cognitive developmental psychological model of Piaget and Kohlberg. Fowler applies this cognitive psychology to concepts, ideas, beliefs and faith regarding the true nature of the world and our lives. "Faith enables us to see our lives against a backdrop of a more comprehensive image of what constitutes the true power, true value, and meaning of life.... Faith forms a way of seeing our everyday life in relation to holistic images of what we may call the ultimate environment.... The [person's] image of, and relation with the ultimate environment determines the way he or she pursues the inescapable, inevitable task of finding meaning and purpose in life.... This image is

(a) Consciously held, (b) Has the dynamics of a relationship with a person, to one degree or another, (c) Is the central, most important force in a person's life, shaping perceptions, priorities and passions, and (d) Changes throughout the lifespan as a result of faith development through stages." I would add that these stages, while descriptive of the prevalent forms of faith through linear developmental stages, also constitute phases in our cycles of belief which we may experience at any age or stage of development.

### **Intuitive-Projective Faith**

Lownsdale describes a pre-faith stage of infancy which I combine with the intuitive stage of early childhood faith for our purposes in the five element cycle. This corresponds to the developmental stage from roughly eight months to seven years old.

- In the Pre-stage we first distinguish some separateness between ourselves and the world (comprehending the comings and goings of our mother/caregiver).
- We begin to make use of speech and symbols to make meaning.
- We have difficulty seeing cause and effect at this stage and are given to "magical thinking."
- We see only one perspective at a time. We assume that our own perspective is the only one that exists and project that perspective onto others, assuming that they see things in exactly the same way that we do.
- IMAGINATION, dream and vision imagery is essential for creating meaning at this stage.

This phase of life corresponds to the Wood element (Liver and Gall Bladder meridians). We might consider whether blockage of energy in this phase represents an imbalance in our use of imagination.

- Are we using sufficient creative vision and dream imagery to allow a large enough conception of the universe in which to fulfill our full potential?
- Are we dwelling in our own personal dream-world to the extent that we are

ignoring concrete circumstances and consequences. (Yes, it is important to learn to fly with your imagination, but actually attempting to fly from the roof of a building could have severe consequences.)

- Are we paying too much or too little attention to intuition, symbols, and signs? All of the sights, sounds, sensations, etc. of our daily experiences can resonate with meaning. Reflecting on the symbolic or metaphorical potential of events in our lives can be a powerful tool for assessing our personal balance, wholeness and wellness. Denying that our feelings and experiences have meaning leads to a meaningless existence. Yet assigning particular meaning to events or "omens" without evaluating whether this actually makes sense in the context of a lived life leaves us at the mercy of superstition—beliefs that are not grounded in our knowledge of ourselves and our lives.
- Are we stuck in the phase of cognitive egocentricity, failing to consider different perspectives, or the perspectives of others? Are we assuming that our own current opinion (on a subject that relates to our goal) is the only one right answer or viewpoint? This may result in magical thinking. We may believe that we are the only source of valid ideas, and even that our current perception is the only possible perception. This can severely limit our resources and our options.
- Perhaps we are neglecting the egocentric perspective and become overwhelmed by multiple options and the varied opinions of others. Do we need to get back in touch with what is best for us personally at this particular moment?

### **Literal Mythic Faith**

The literal/mythic stage corresponds to the "school years" from around age seven until adolescence. This stage is characterized by a focus on the stories and beliefs of the community.

- We are given to literal interpretation of moral rules and attitudes.

- We favor a singularity of meaning, in which fact is distinguished from and valued over fantasy.
- There is a focus on Reciprocity.
- There is a tendency to Perfectionism.

This phase corresponds to the Fire element (Heart, Small Intestine, Circulation Sex and Triple Warmer meridians). Energy imbalance in this element might indicate an imbalance in our faith in and identification with group beliefs.

- Are we taking the attitude that our particular group or community has all the right answers? Do we believe that our own culture, family, professional group, etc. is the only group that is doing things right? Do we feel that the only way to reach our personal goals is by completely conforming to the conventions of the community?
- Perhaps we are neglecting the truths of the culture in which we find ourselves. Could we benefit from being conscious of conventions and not always having to re-invent the wheel or go it alone? Do we need to make the shift from our own individual perspective to the larger group perspective in order to achieve our current goal(s)?
- Are we hemmed in by a narrow, literal interpretation of the group beliefs? Do we expect precise reciprocity in our community dealings? Are we taking the attitude that if we do "right" according to our conception of community standards, the result or reward must be commensurate, or else we feel betrayed by our community?
- Are we not literal enough when we consider group mores? Do we loosely interpret the letter of the law, while circumventing the spirit of the law?
- Do we see ourselves as excessively bad or excessively good based on our ability to strictly adhere to moral rules and attitudes that do not allow much room for mistakes? Are we trying to maintain an image of ourselves as perfect, or seeing

ourselves as worthless if we are less than perfect?

### **Conventional, Synthetic Faith**

This stage corresponds to adolescence. The child moves into adolescence and becomes disillusioned with literalism and blind acceptance of authority. Increasing abilities of abstract thinking allow reflection upon the self and the capacity to view one's own actions from multiple/others' perspectives.

- We can see the value of others' evaluations.
- We tend to seek the approval of others/authorities outside of the self.
- There is a tendency to fail to use creative internal resources.
- We internalize the beliefs and practices of our community and behave accordingly.
- We see ourselves in terms of our relationships or community values and rituals.

This phase corresponds to the Earth element (Stomach and Spleen/Pancreas meridians). Blockage in this element may have something to do with our beliefs and faith regarding our conception of ourselves in relation to others or the community.

- Are we placing too little or too much reliance on seeing ourselves through the eyes of others? Are we denying the value of the evaluation of others, or do we focus on others' opinion of us to the exclusion of any internal sense of self?
- Are we placing too great a value on conforming to the values of our peer group, neglecting the formation of our own personal values? Are we unable to live up to the values of our immediate community, and suffering a low sense of self-worth as a result?
- Are we engaging in too much or too little reflection on our own feelings and thoughts? Are we "wallowing" or fixating on our own thoughts and feelings to the extent that we get bogged down and stuck, or are we in denial of our true inner thoughts and feelings about our experience.

- Are we having difficulty in making commitments, keeping promises, or sticking to our personal values? Are we determined to follow through on our promises or goals with a steadfastness or fanaticism regardless of the consequences? Have our mistakes and shortcomings in following through on our sincere intentions resulted in a negative self-concept?
- Are we defining ourselves exclusively in terms of our relationships and roles?

An imbalance can be severe in this element if we have suffered a betrayal by a significant individual or group in our personal life. Energy imbalances can occur when events seem to contradict our most cherished and deeply held beliefs. When we choose to or feel forced by events to re-examine our concept of self and the content of our faith; when we retrace the development of our personal world-view and question what we believe in, there tends to be a high degree of disequilibrium. The Goal Balancing technique is very useful in becoming conscious of this process and coming to terms with it.

### **Responsible (individuative-reflective) Faith**

This is the stage of young adulthood. At this stage we begin to assume personal responsibility for our own personal lifestyle, beliefs, and attitudes.

- We work to construct an individual, rational, functional world-view.
- Symbols are considered as conceptual/metaphorical, rather than having singular, literal, fixed meaning.
- Paradoxes, polarities, and complexity are a challenge at this stage as we balance our personal priorities and seek to distinguish relative and absolute truths.

This phase corresponds to the Metal element (Lung and Large Intestine meridians). Energy imbalances in this element may correspond to issues of assuming personal responsibility.

- An imbalance in this element can result from no longer defining ourselves as a

composite of our roles and meanings we have for others. Are we having difficulty defining and asserting our own view of ourselves and life or are we failing to take personal responsibility for the roles that we play in different areas of our lives and the choices that we make in different contexts?

- Are we focusing on goals that are not in keeping with our personal values, or are we in the process of creating a rational, workable, world-view that will clarify and facilitate the achievement of our goal(s)? Perhaps we need to critically analyze and reshape our present world-view, our faith in what's really real, in relation to the goal which we are seeking. Or perhaps we need to critically analyze and reshape our goals in relation to our personal beliefs.
- Are we becoming frustrated by our inability to "solve" paradoxes or be in full control of the complexities of our lives? Perhaps we are too apt to throw up our hands and assume we have no responsibility when confronted with a situation that we cannot single-handedly resolve. Are we too rigidly identified with one polar extreme, or do we tend to get tossed on a sea of relative values with no fixed compass of principles?

### **Reintegrative (conjunctive and universalizing) Faith**

These stages correspond to mid and later life. Fowler defines the "universalizing" stage as a separate and rarely reached stage of faith, while the conjunctive stage is seen as less rare, but still not a stage attained by most people. At this stage we re-evaluate and re-integrate all of the aspects of self and life experience.

- We rehabilitate all of the aspects of ourselves that have been left undeveloped, ignored, evaded, or denied.
- Paradoxes and Polar opposites are not seen as puzzles to be solved, but rather as mysteries to be accepted and appreciated.
- Either-or propositions are reframed as both-and.

- Humans are seen as BOTH determined and personally responsible for their choices. God is personal and abstract. There is both good and evil at the core of the Soul.
- We can a sense of transcendent value of faith and community among all humanity. This sense is extended in the "universalizing" stage to a fellowship among all beings and a connection with the ultimate environment, "living with a sense of felt participation in power that unifies and transforms the world."
- We have a tendency to sacrifice personal, individual life for the benefit of all.
- We develop a passion for the greatest good and the highest truth over lesser concerns of nation, tribe, institution, family, success, money, sexuality, etc., a "monotheism" in opposition to "idolatrous gods". While we value our experience of life perhaps more than ever before, we hold it loosely, feeling less concern for our individual survival.

This phase corresponds to the Water element (Kidney and Bladder meridians). Imbalances in this element may indicate an issue of reintegration of forgotten or undeveloped aspects of the Soul which relate to our goal(s).

- Reaching a new goal requires reintegration of the Soul, the whole person, to fit the new circumstances. Is there some aspect of ourselves that we need to awaken to reach our goal? Are we fixating on some fault in our character that may need to be recognized and accepted, but not necessarily revealed in?
- Are we hesitating to adapt ourselves to meet our goals because of the changes that will also occur in addition to our goal? Perhaps we need to alter our goal to match a more comprehensive understanding of our circumstances, or we may need to give up some of our need to control the outcome of acting according to our beliefs, accepting that "the future's not ours to see," or that we must keep our commitments regardless of the consequences.

- Do we need to look at an “either/or” debate from a broader more integrated, “both/and” perspective? When we realize that polar opposites are no longer problems to be solved but paradoxes to be accepted, we may experience a great release of tension, or we may experience a crisis in determining where to put all of the energy previously devoted to a certain “side” of a debate or battle.
- It may be necessary to accept that human beings are both good and evil; God is both personal and abstract; people are both responsible and victims of circumstances.

### **The Shen Cycle of the Five Elements**

For nearly all goals, these are the phases of faith that correspond to the cycle of change, or growth, necessary to reach the goal. This is the shen cycle of the five elements. In healthy circumstances when our energy is flowing through it's cycles, imbalances are corrected with a good night's rest. We move from one goal to the next, fulfilling our telos, our life's purpose, and tend to have more joy than any other feeling or emotion.

So, for any goal, we might :

1. Start with an intuitive feeling about what we need to be doing to fulfill our telos, the purpose for which we were created.
2. From this intuitive feeling we might then look to our community or culture group to find the “right” way to reach the goal.
3. This would be followed by analyzing and understanding our goal from our own personal point of view, and assessing whether the group norms are appropriate for us personally in the current circumstances.
4. Next, we would assume responsibility for our personal lifestyle, beliefs, commitments and attitudes, and the consequences which our actions will have for ourselves and others.
5. Having recognized the roles that we play with others, and the perceptions others may have of us, we allow ourselves to be who we are and make the changes in ourselves corresponding with our own goals and purposes. Finally we achieve a transcendent sense of purpose, living as

if the goal was already accomplished and manifesting in our lives either instantaneously or gradually.

### **The Ko or Control Cycle of the Five Elements**

The Ko or control cycle may be useful when we find an imbalance in a particular element. When we analyze the pattern of imbalances on the five elements diagram, it may indicate the likelihood of a particular element “controlling” another element. In this case, it may be more fruitful to consider the metaphors of the controlling element than those of the element that shows the imbalance.

1. When a muscle test indicates an imbalance in the Intuitive Faith (Wood) element, it may indicate too much or too little Responsible Faith related to the specific goal. Examining the areas of our lives in which we may be taking on too much or too little responsibility could correct the imbalance in the Intuitive Faith (Wood) element.
2. An imbalance in the Literal Faith (Fire) element could be controlled by, or have an imbalance because of, a lack of reintegration after reaching a goal. Or, perhaps we have reintegrated our life in ways that are not yet appropriate if the goal is not yet a literal reality.
3. An imbalance in the Conventional Faith (Earth) element might be balanced by looking at Intuitive Faith. Are we relying too much on convention and not listening to our own intuitive knowing for guidance toward our goals? Or perhaps we are indulging in “magical-thinking,” failing to note obvious cause and effect relationships (conventional wisdom).
4. An imbalance in the Responsible Faith (Metal) element might be balanced by considering being more literal and following the rules of the group. Perhaps we can to use the group energy for accomplishing our goals rather than feeling that we have all the responsibility for seeing that things happen. When we take responsibility for things that are literally out of our control, it may show up as an imbalance in the metal element

and what may be needed is a more literal look at reality.

5. An imbalance in the Reintegrative Faith (Water) element could be changed by considering how we feel about Conventional Faith. Are we able to see ourselves through the eyes of others? Are we being self reflective enough in terms of how reaching our goal will allow us to be different and therefore less conventional? Maybe reaching our personal goals won't fit conveniently into our social circumstances and result in a whole series of changes and adjustments in our life. How will our roles and relationships be different when we reach our personal goals? Sometimes Reintegration Faith is not possible and therefore the goal is not accomplished. Perhaps it is not really our own personal goal but something we are attempting because of suggestion, demand, or force form others.

Considering the faith dimension of the five element metaphor can be useful in helping each of us as a Soul, a whole person, to fulfill our telos, our reason for being or purpose in life .

When we allow all of these elements and phase metaphors to function simultaneously, we are able to be fully the soul we were created to be and have a life that is characterized by an awareness that our ultimate environment includes all human beings. Our life is lived in knowing that we are fulfilling the telos for which we were created on a moment by moment basis. We recognize that we are far from perfect, yet we know that we are on the right track and come

back into balance very easily. We have a sense of some security and significance in our life. We are able to give and receive love. We hold life to be of great value, but hold life loosely, striving to be who we are rather than live as long as possible.

All of these phases of faith occur cyclically, sometimes shifting moment to moment, sometimes characterizing long periods in our life. Some phases may be consistently experienced according to our personality or time of life, while others are only experienced for fleeting moments. Still, we are capable of all of these phases of faith, and will naturally cycle through them.

When our lives do not contain a sense of security or significance, when we are not able to love and do not feel loved, when we are holding on to life too tightly, that's an indication that we are out of balance. We can assess our posture and use muscle testing to give us an indication of where we are out of balance. It can be of great benefit to take a moment to do this on a daily basis. Using these metaphors of the faith cycle in understanding ourselves and our goals can be very effective in coming into harmony with our own ultimate environment and finding our place and purpose within it.

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