

## **Mindfulness Externally: Becoming Aware of the Four Elements Around You**

*Based on quiz in Urban Homesteading: Heirloom Skills for Sustainable Living*

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*Adapted for Buddhist 4 Elements practice (see Majjhima Nikaya 10) by Anushka Fernandopulle*

If you don't know an answer, try to find out! And know each element, internally and externally...

### **Earth** 🌱

1. What kinds of rocks and minerals are found in your area? What's their story?
2. What primary ecological events influenced the land where you live?
3. Name five birds in your area. Which are here all year and which are migratory? Where do the migratory ones come from/go to in other times?
4. What species have become extinct in your area?
5. Who lived here before you and what were their primary subsistence techniques?
6. What spring wildflowers are the first to bloom where you live?
7. Name five native edible plants in your bioregion and when they grow.
8. Describe the soil around your home.
9. Name five trees in your area. Which are native? If none, which other trees are native?
10. What is the largest wilderness area in your region? Have you been there lately?

### **Air** ☐

1. In your home, point out the 4 main directions (NSEW).
2. From what direction do winter storms generally come in your area?
3. What does the air feel like in the current season where you live? Do you notice changes over the seasons?
4. What did the air feel like where you were growing up in the current season? Did you notice changes over the seasons?
5. What does the air feel like when it is about to rain?
6. How long is the growing season where you live?
7. On what day of the year are the shadows the shortest where you live?
8. Were the stars out last night? Could you see them? If not, why not?
9. How is climate change impacting the air in your area?
10. What impacts is pollution having on the lungs of people in your area? Are there particular neighborhoods that are more impacted?

### **Fire** 🔥

1. How much daylight is there on the longest day of the year where you live? The shortest day? How much of a difference is there?
2. Do you celebrate the summer and winter solstice? If so, how?

3. How many days until the moon is full?
4. What percentage of the energy that you use comes from renewable energy sources (solar, wind, etc)?
5. How much gasoline do you use a week, on the average?
6. Where does this gasoline come from? How much does it cost relative to other liquids?
7. What energy costs you the most money? What kind of energy is it?
8. What developed and potential energy resources are in your area?
9. What plans are there for development of energy/mineral resources in your area?
10. Where does your garbage go? Is it incinerated? Where does your recycling go? Who sorts it? Where does it end up? How is energy used in this process?

## **Water**

1. Trace the water you drink from precipitation to tap.
2. What happens to the water and other matter when you flush the toilet?
3. What kind of water is used in your toilet? Do you use [greywater](#) collection systems?
4. Is there underground fresh water where you live? What happened to it?
5. Are there any streams that have been paved over near you?
6. What do you know about your [watershed](#)? Does it have a name?
7. Where does your sewage go? If the system is overwhelmed where does it go?
8. Name some nonhuman beings who live in the water around you. How are they doing? What is their life cycle?
9. What is the greatest threat to the overall ecological balance in your area?
10. What is the history of land and water use by humans in your area during the past century?