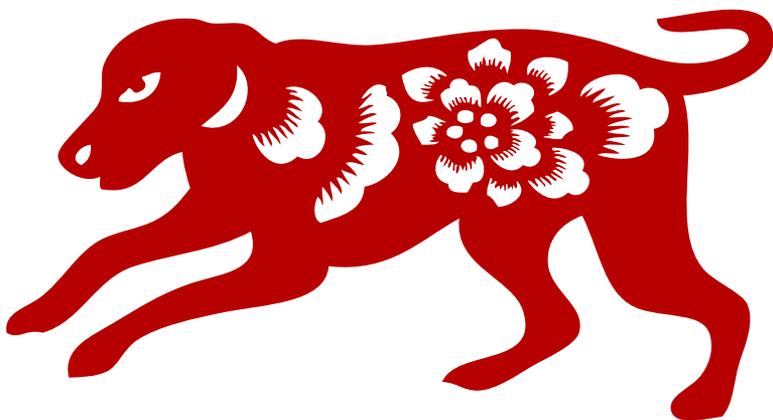


**The Year of the Earth Dog
February 16, 2018 - February 5, 2019**



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The inevitability of change is a fundamental principle in Chinese astrology. And the ability to skillfully adjust to continually shifting cycles, is considered to be a longevity art. Wisdom tells us, that no matter what difficulties you are facing, no matter how hopeless or frightening the situation seems, if you wait it out, a turning point will come. The important thing is to maintain your composure, and recognize the moment when appropriate action will be effective. That turning point is now. Welcome to the Year of the Earth Dog.

Characteristics of Earth element

Let me begin with the element (Earth) that rules this year. Earth has the qualities of stability, nourishment, consistency, balance and harmony. Earth is related to the digestive system in Chinese medicine, and its function of selecting, through our appetite, the correct foods for our condition. When working well, our earth element effortlessly transforms food and thought, (everything we take in), into substance and vitality. When depleted we can get stuck, exhausted, lose our way, become obsessive worriers.

The coming lunar year, which begins on February 16, is a double Earth year. Not only do we have Earth appearing in the natural cycle of heavenly chi (which progresses through Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water for two years each), but also, the Dog's innate element is Earth. This preponderance of Earth may bring the turmoil and conflict of the last two years (which were

a dangerous combination of Fire and Metal) to a halt. Not an end—just a halt. Imagine a rampaging band of uncouth brigands heading straight towards your village, intent on pillaging and looting, when suddenly they stumble into a vast mist covered bog. Mired in mud, they are bewildered and rendered helpless— still there, but unable to press ahead with their destructive attack. Meanwhile, the terrified villagers have an opportunity to regroup, sort out their defenses, and mount an effective resistance. This seemingly last minute save, is simply the natural energetics of Earth element arriving to regulate the intensity and violence of the Fire/Metal energy which has held sway for the last two years.

To make best use of this incoming Earth energy, it will be crucial to pay attention to your diet. By this I mean not just the food you eat, but everything you take in; this includes thoughts, ideas, information, and attitudes. Attention to what you feed yourself this year will have profound effects on the health of your own Earth element, (your ability to sort fact from fiction) and may determine whether you can rise courageously above the turmoil that threatens the village, or end up in the bog with the marauders.

Characteristics of the astrological Dog

The Dog is all about loyalty and guardianship. Honest, trustworthy, and fair, Dog is a vigilant protector of friends, family, and all he holds dear. Some call Dog a cynic and an anxious worrier. But who among us doesn't know this territory? When you care about something deeply, and are charged with protecting it with your life, you'd be anxious too.

Chinese nobles and Taoist monks developed several well known dog breeds—notably the Mastiff (the oldest breed in the world), the Pekinese, the Shar Pei, and the Chow Chow. It is this last which best symbolizes the astrological Dog. Chows have been domesticated for at least 5000 years, as both house guardian and battlefield companion. Monks depended on the Chow to chase evil spirits from the monastery. On the battlefield, it was notorious for its ability to cripple enemy horses while maintaining a steadfast watch over its human, whose corpse it would protect even with its own life.

This image tells us all we need to know about the possibilities available to us in the coming year. When well supported, the best qualities of Dog come forward— corruption is rooted out, tyranny and oppression overturned, and justice prevails. However, when dogs are stressed, isolated, and left without compassionate leadership, (consider the poor junkyard dog chained alone outside), they can turn into dangerous unpredictable lunatics. This we want to avoid by putting aside our differences, seeing the best in each other, teaming up for the higher good, and generally behaving like a well organized pack.

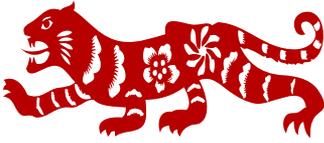
The restoration of justice is the opportunity of the Dog year. To see how you might best support this worthy agenda, read the comments about your astrological animal below. (Remember, the Chinese zodiac is based on the lunar year. The lunar year always begins on the second new moon after the winter solstice, so if you were born in January or early February, you might belong to the animal of the preceding year. Best to look it up.)



RAT: You are the master of information gathering and research. Your job this year is to make sure everyone is in full possession of the facts. Your relationship with Dog is a neutral one. You respect Dog's loyalty, a quality you both share, and are somewhat in awe of Dog's defensive prowess. The problem is Dog tends to ignore you, which you can't understand because you have all this important information that the Dog obviously needs to be effective. The solution—make it your job to be an advocate for the fair, honest, and complete reporting of facts. Promote the highest standard of truth telling. Make it your mission to politely point out any laziness or inaccuracy in people's thinking. Your motto this year is from Don Miguel Ruiz's Four Agreements: "Be impeccable with your words." And, I would add, hold a mirror up for others in this regard too.



OX: Your super power is endurance. You actually managed well in your personal life last year, buoyed by the sharpness, clarity, and ambition of the Fire Rooster. But your natural element is Earth, so the coming Earth Dog year will be an excellent opportunity to harness yourself to the wagon, and help the whole team clean up. There is much wreckage to repair. Though your tendency is to work alone, undisturbed by surrounding chaos, allow yourself now to join with others in pursuit of a more just world. A natural pairing would be to lend your considerable strength to the Rat, who is in charge of information gathering. Freedom of the press might be a cause you could both get behind.



TIGER: If you managed to stay on course last year and not get distracted, you should now have completed your recovery from the Monkey year (2016). Now, it's your time to show up. All the place mats in Chinese restaurants say that Tiger is a courageous, charismatic leader. You often wonder at this, knowing how much you prefer to stay in your cave, well out of the fray, getting fat and calmly biding your time. But when conditions are right, you flex your muscles, yawn and stretch, and come loping, gloriously, into the world. This is one of those years. Your special power is integrity. When you come out of your cave, you notice that the world has gone dangerously off the rails in your absence, and there is not a jot of integrity to be found anywhere. The Dog is your natural partner in the noble endeavor of restoring justice, equality, and fairness in the realm. You've got one year and the wind is at your back. Go.



RABBIT: You get a pass this year on activism. Your sensitive nature set you up to be clobbered by last year's Rooster (those talons just about tore you apart), so you have one job now: rest, restore, refresh. You can come out of hiding when you feel ready, because Dog is actually very compatible with you. You will find this year's energy congenial and trustworthy. You can start to reach out, reconnect with friends, and plan for the Pig year coming up in 2019. Your part in helping the Dog to restore justice, is simply to help people reconnect with their own sensitivity and spirituality. Don't make the mistake

of thinking this is a small thing. It is central to re-establishing a just and fair society.



DRAGON: You are the icon of charismatic leadership. We depend on you to embody the archetype of awe, magic, and royal deportment. The problem for you this year is it's hard to give up your self image in order to join the Dog's team. You want to enchant everyone with alchemy. The Dog wants us all to be practical, and join the fight for justice. You view the Dog as a conventional realist, lacking imagination. The Dog sees you as a fickle grandstander who can't be trusted on the battlefield. Best way for you to work with this (remember, Dog has the upper hand now), is to devote yourself to the high road. Be the celestial dragon that inspires people. Help them remember what it feels like to believe in magic and transformation. Martin Luther King was a Dragon. Like King, in your words and actions, remind people of the dream. Help us keep our eyes on the prize.



SNAKE: In a year of political activism, it's easy to forget the importance of self reflection, spirituality, and the cultivation of wisdom. For you, wisdom is an inside job, acquired through assiduous self examination, and not easily challenged by trendy popular dogma. Your job this year, is to keep a quiet space for these activities, and set an example for others who may be in danger of losing contact with their inner compass and innate wisdom. For without this

connection to our inner light, how will we maintain clarity as we seek to restore a just society? In the words of 19th century Quaker Caroline Fox, "Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be given..."



HORSE: This promises to be a most successful year for you. Horse is part of the compatible trio comprised of Horse/Dog/Tiger. Some call it the martial trio, a reference to the shared characteristics of nobility, valor, and integrity these three exemplify. And, like Dog and Tiger, you have great physical prowess. Most importantly, now that Dog is in charge for a year, you can relax your wariness about potential predators, and move confidently into your role as noble war horse. Of course, what I mean by that is not literally going to war (though that was often your role in changing the course of world history). Rather, you are invited to be such a visible sign of dignity and courage for others, that you inspire forward momentum, even in the face of daunting challenges and possible defeat. Horsemen have a saying: "Throw your heart over the fence, and your horse will follow." In that same way, you can be the inspiration for heart based action for all of us.



SHEEP: I don't know how else to say this, but you and Dog can really set each other's teeth on edge. You are both anxious worriers, but you tend to mistake this shared tendency, for compatibility. However, your M.O in a crisis is

to manage the team, so everyone has a role and gets along. The Dog just attacks. You find this primitive and unskillful. Dog finds your approach a waste of time. The two of you lack respect for one another. What to do? Since Dog is in charge this year, your best strategy is to lie low and apply your considerable management skills to your personal life. Reorganize your approach to a problem, reassess your goals, heck, even reorganize your closet. Just don't attempt to organize other people this year. It will undoubtedly backfire, and you may find yourself getting nipped by an irritable Dog. And there's always arts and crafts, the most reliable refuge for a stressed Sheep. Next year, the Year of the Pig, you will be back in action. The Dog will need a rest, and everyone will be grateful for your skillful approach to moving the team forward.



MONKEY: You have been called “the wizard of the impossible”.

There is no one who can match you in resourcefulness, versatility, and irrepressibility. Your genius for turning disaster into wisdom and success is legendary. And, unlike the rest of us, you actually thrive in the current level of societal chaos. To you, it's just the right amount of stimulation to keep you on your game. Can you see how much we need you right now? The challenge you face this year, is to put the needs of society above your personal agenda. That will take some discipline on your part. So here is the invitation: find a way to apply your genius to coming up with brilliant unconventional solutions to society's problems. Set aside your personal ambition and join the movement.



ROOSTER: Though your clarity and precision were much appreciated last year, your work is done now and your power is in decline. You have some conflict with Dog, perhaps feeling that his efforts lack precision. Though you may want to step back in with advice and criticism, since it's so easy for you to see the truth of things, I urge you to resist that temptation. Dog has the upper hand this year, and has powerful friends. Your attempts will be seen as tactless and fussy, rather than the obvious efficient strategic advice that seems so clear to you. What will help in the coming year, is for you to remind us how to delay gratification and invest in long term goals. Roosters have an exceptional talent for this. "Rome wasn't built in a day", is how you live your life. We are all a little desperate and that message is an important bit of wisdom for these times. It would be a mistake to replace one TV personality with another, and your clear perception of the long term issues will help keep us focused on proceeding judiciously rather than impulsively.



DOG: Some people say that when your year comes around in the 12 year cycle, it often brings bad luck. There are even magical Taoist rituals of protection to be done for 3 days before and after the new year, for those born in that year. The reason for all this, is that during your year it's like sitting in the front row of the class. The god of astrology will be calling on you constantly, so it's very easy to get in trouble if you're not prepared.

What I suggest for everyone when their year comes up, is to heed the good old Boy Scout motto, "be prepared". Take the last month before the lunar new year (January 17-Feb. 15), to rest and get your house in order. Take care of your health, especially your diet. Get good sleep. Clarify your goals, and identify your allies (look for Horses, Tigers, Rabbits). Plan your year out to include regular exercise and appropriate play. Be aware that even though you have power and influence this year, Dogs are not loners and it's very important to maintain solid connections with friends and family. From this secure position, and buttressed by select companions, go out and set things aright.



PIG: If it's one thing we need desperately this year, it's a return to civility. What ever happened to decency and good manners? Your job now, is to restore some standards in this crucial area of human interaction. The Pig's super powers are savoir faire and a kind heart. We could all use some reminders of how polite society works, and you're just the one to provide instruction. So perhaps you could begin by hosting some small gatherings—nothing too controversial, something like a book group, or tea-tastings. The point is, we need to learn how to talk to one another again, about things like philosophy, art, and music. Of course that would require people to read, and reflect on the meaning of life. Ah.....there you go. See why we need you?



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And look for Plum's forthcoming publication by Narrye Caldwell, "The Spirit of the Stars: Navigating Your Fate with Pole Star Astrology." This book/DVD is the first book in English to clearly outline both the principles of Chinese Astrology, plus give step-by-step instruction to create and analyze charts in the Zi Wei Dou Shu tradition. To receive updates on the project's publication, contact us:

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