



element five: **CONCENTRATING**

PRACTICING THE 13 ELEMENTS OF ALCHEMY

1 AGGREGATORS AND CONCENTRATORS. Some people are primarily *aggregators*—they create effects through sustained effort over time. Other people are primarily *concentrators*—they create effects through highly concentrated effort in specific moments in time. It's important to have a balance of both.

2 CONTEXTUAL GROUPING. Often more than enough of a particular quality exists in a system, but it's too thinned out when spread across the entire domain. By designing more specialized contexts, we create the concentrations needed for the shifts we seek. This is often more effective than trying to add an element from outside of the system.

3 DIRECTED ATTENTION. It's easy to become overreactive to our environment—directing our attention to the cacophony of cues and prompts continually presenting. Alchemists are in charge of their attention—summoning internal force and directing it intentionally to what matters most. The best concentrators are almost impossible to distract.

4 FRAGMENTATION. When our attention is spread across too many things at once, we may lose the potency necessary to do the *one thing* that matters most. It's important to withdraw our attention from whatever doesn't require us in the moment so we can focus our efforts on the opportunity at hand. In the same way a wandering mind isn't good at solving certain problems, a wandering consciousness is not good at precipitating certain shifts.

5 CONTAMINANTS. We may have the *amount* of an ingredient to create a necessary concentration, but be unable to because of contaminants. The contaminant may be a disabling personality, incompatible quality, entrenched belief, dissonance, or even fear. If we don't recognize the contaminant, we may exhaust our resources adding more and more of the original element. But remain unable to initiate the transformation we seek.

6 DILUTION. Even if we start with a high concentration of a quality, characteristic, or ability, it may become diluted. Sometimes this happens when other things compete for time, resources, or attention. Other times this happens because of fuzzy thinking or lack of distinct action. Something may even become diluted simply through the passage of too much time.

7 ENERGY. Learning to concentrate energies is essential to alchemy. Often our attention is so divided we can't generate the force necessary to precipitate movement. And our potency may also be more limited by our fatigue than by our ability. Alchemists learn to build specific internal energies then direct them in highly concentrated bursts.

8 EXPERIENCE DESIGN. It is sometimes necessary to stop the flow of the *normal* so people can get a sense of the *new*. The alchemist is uncompromising in designing every aspect of a space to create the concentrations needed to precipitate a first experience. This means designing an environment that is disorienting, inspiring, rich, energizing—one that temporarily displaces most of what's been relevant and reliable in the past.

9 PRESENCE. Often we don't fully show up in the moment because parts of us are still occupying our past. That which we have still not accepted and forgiven. Or, any part of our *old story* still hooking us. We may also lose potency when parts of us are projected into the future—expectations, attachment to outcomes, or obsessions. We are fully present when *all parts of us* are concentrated in the now. This is one of the most essential qualities of the alchemist.