



element eight: **FUSING**

PRACTICING THE 13 ELEMENTS OF ALCHEMY

1 RECONCILE OPPOSITES. Often we assume that if one thing is true, it's opposite must be false—impossible or invalid. But opposites may both be true. When we understand them together, we find the greater truth. Antitheses appear irreconcilable and push against each other. So it's tempting to choose one and deny or silo the other. But in alchemy, *polarity is potential*. That which is the hardest to reconcile enables the biggest leap and release of power.

2 ASSUME RELATIONSHIP. What is most polarized appears least related. But often it's the most related. Like north and south poles of a magnet, the polarities are two ends of the same thing—not two different things. Cut a bar magnet in half and one pole doesn't disappear. Both halves now contain both polarities. When we fuse, it's essential to see things in larger contexts of relationship, as parts of greater wholes. If we don't see a connection between extremes, it's probably because we have too small a view.

3 BEGIN AS AN INNER ART. We are not one thing, but many things—an array of divergent potentials and oppositions. Some we embrace. Others we deny and repress or simply struggle to integrate. Fusion begins as an inner art. What we fuse in ourselves we can bridge in the world. And what we deny in ourselves, we project and fight in the world. Ask, “What am I afraid to admit about myself? What makes me assert too strongly it couldn't possibly be true? What am I absolutely sure I am not?”

4 PLAYFULLY COMBINE. The most interesting fusions arise from what seems unlikely or unrelated. So it takes great leaps of imagination and playfulness to see how they might come together. Fusion is the basis of novelty and innovation. Most of what emerges in the world is not because of new elements, but new combinations of what already exists.

5 SPOT SEPARATION CONSCIOUSNESS. Separation consciousness lures us into believing that we have value in contrast to something else. It tells us who we are by defining what we are not. And it produces low-level solidarity and meaning in groups—which is why some come to depend upon enemies and threats to survive. But separation limits and contains. It shrinks the interfaces that unlock evolutionary potential. We become most fully ourselves in relationship with everything, not in isolation from it.

6 LOVE. We understand most that which we love. What we despise, we cannot fully discern. When we look, we see our judgments more than the essence of the thing. And our emotion of rejection creates greater separation. Love attracts things to us even if they are very different. And it enables us to enter and understand them. We feel as it feels, see as it sees, and know as it knows. *Love unifies.* It's the most potent power by which to understand and fuse difference.

7 DON'T JUST MELD. When two things coalesce or fuse, something entirely new may emerge—as when hydrogen and oxygen combine to make water. In other types of fusion, the properties of each thing remain distinct but joined—as when a graft is fused onto a tree. Some fusions may even do both. But the point is never to make one thing like another. The worst fusions are obliterations or assimilations where nothing new emerges and the elegance of the parts is lost.

8 COME INTO PROXIMITY. It's easy to demonize or make a caricature of things we know little about. Seen from a distance, that which is different appears oddly exaggerated and distorted. We see its outlines in ways that make it appear funny or foolish. Or we may be unsure what it is and how to relate. As we know more, it's easier to come into relationship. Things close together over time fuse more frequently.

9 BE BOTH SIMULTANEOUSLY. Rather than fusing, we sometimes separate things into different domains. We can be both one thing and another, but not at the same time. This leads to fragmentation—and loneliness for the parts we leave behind. We are a mystic, but not as a manager. We are artist and scientist, but not both simultaneously. We design our buildings, organize our days, and define our professions in compartments. But some compartments need each other and would become stronger together. As we fuse them, we become both more powerful and more fully alive.