

# Assessing Health in Charts

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In the spring of 1970, I dove down the rabbit hole and began my study and practice of serious astrology. I use the qualifier "serious" to distinguish the astrology that captured my interest from the pop culture astrology marketed as entertainment in this country.

I was pursuing what were for me various holy grails. One driving ambition was to better understand who we are as individuals and what we're here for on our very disparate life-journeys, but that quest had not been going well for me. My undergraduate studies in psychology, designed to be a prerequisite for a career as a psychotherapist, had proven not merely lacking in this regard, but extremely disappointing. My academic education had seemingly reached a dead end.

Astrology had never been, for me, an attractive option. How could the relative positions of celestial bodies possibly reveal any valid or useful information about an individual human being? Sure, solar storms and moon tides had real impact on earthly life, but defining character and personality? C'mon. That seemed utterly preposterous. At the time, however, I was going through my great birthing love affair, and my beloved wanted her chart done. Well, her wish was my command. So, down the rabbit hole I went, learning to erect charts and reading textbooks about interpretation. I fully expected to find nothing, but that didn't matter. I had a more pressing agenda. Naturally, I started by erecting my own chart and my beloved's, and almost immediately thereafter began adding the charts of all my friends. Why? Because what I found turned my world upside down. To call the revelations shocking would be a profound understatement.

My initial skepticism was smashed by the eerily accurate and often uncanny correspondences between my real-life perceptions of myself and others and what I found in our charts. To my great surprise, astrology turned out to be a quite extraordinary system for deciphering the "what" of who we are as individuals, even though it didn't actually venture into the murky realm of "why."

I have no doubt that some astrologers, students, and devotees will disagree with me about this. They see what they regard as clear and obvious answers to the "why" question in every chart. In my opinion, though, what they're doing is overlaying metaphysical presumptions onto the symbolic information

from charts. As far as I'm concerned, that's fine if one is drawn to make the leap, and the term "Evolutionary Astrology" was coined to describe that approach to chart interpretation. For some people, that's the only astrology they know. I regard it as a hybrid, however, and feel that it's important to understand that metaphysics and astrology are not the same. (For instance, the assumption that the nodes of the Moon reveal relevant information about past lives or "soul direction" is one such crossover of metaphysics with astrology.)

Another obsession that propelled me into the nether world of astrology were the mysteries of sex, love, and intimacy. Heck, that's what had motivated me to study astrology in the first place. After all, I was 20 years old then, and the "sexual revolution" was in full swing all around me. I hoped that astrology might help me make sense of that compulsive madness. And it did, to some extent. Even though the insights didn't help much in real-life relationships, I appreciated the increased clarity. I still do.

Also, I was interested in health — physical wellness and illness. Bodies are amazing, but they're not bulletproof. Neither are psyches. Both malfunction and get broken, and difficulties with one can often disrupt the other. Physical and emotional suffering are facts of life, but some people seem to be prone to so much more pain and trauma than others. Could astrology be helpful in diagnosing illness or defining areas of vulnerability?

In my early studies, all the general textbooks I read contained basic information about bodily correspondences with the major symbols in astrology (planets, signs, houses, and aspects). I even bought and read a number of books dedicated specifically to medical astrology as a specific sub-discipline. None of them impressed me. I concluded that this entire subject was a hornet's nest, and that the standard approaches astrology students learn would be woefully inadequate where health was concerned — too superficial, not sufficiently nuanced, and quite likely not useful at all to clients. Since I had no plans to become a medical professional, I decided to close off the entire realm of physical health and illness from my astrological work. Better safe than sorry.

Over the decades, however, I did develop one meaningful assessment regarding bodily health. It lets me offer something useful to offer clients that may be helpful to them in living while avoiding medical diagnosis and all the legal and ethical traps that come with that. It's a very simple yardstick — a division that places each individual into one of two categories or "clubs." For some people, illness and injury are essential spiritual teachings that resonate throughout the entire life. For other people, physical injury and illness are just events and experiences that come with life in bodies and are neutral in meaning.

When I look at any individual's natal chart, the condition of three houses is particularly revealing with regard to health and illness. Those three are the 1st, 6th, and 12th houses. When those houses are occupied by planets in a

significant way, then health and illness will be obvious concerns. Other factors in the chart may add to that judgment, but the condition of those three houses is central. About 30% of charts I see fall into this category. The other 70% do not. This doesn't mean that the 70% group has no planets in any of the three houses. They may have one or two. But that doesn't make those houses stand out emphatically.

How to determine emphasis in charts is a hugely important topic, but not one that I want to take on in this commentary. Beyond learning the wide range of possible interpretive meanings for different alignments (planets in signs, houses, and aspects), determining emphasis is absolutely critical to the refined art of chart interpretation. The placement of the Sun, Moon, and Saturn are obviously critical factors, but assessing overall emphasis involves much more than just those. While many rules can be learned, this skill tends to develop with time and experience. I've erected and examined 35,000 charts, and I've done more than 12,000 sessions with clients. That provides me with a massive database that a beginning student won't have. So, I will forego discussing the many subtleties of emphasis here and just cut to the chase.

For the 70% group, wellness and illness are simply normal parts of human life — conditions that happen to us all. Every demographic encompasses the entire range of possibilities around injury, illness, chronic disease, and disability. Some people in the 70% group go through relatively less of that suffering, while others undergo a great deal of it. In other words, a lack of specific emphasis on the 1st, 6th, and 12th houses (which is what defines the group) does not imply "good health," nor does it rule out ill health or minimize its inevitability.

What the absence of emphasis tells me, however, is that when illness or injury do occur for members of the 70% group, the challenge is straightforward and fairly simple — either address the situation pragmatically and get well as quickly as possible, or, should recovery not happen for any reason, then accept the consequences and learn to live with the damage. Either recover (change) or adapt (accept), but don't dwell on the hows and whys. For these people, wellness and illness are not areas where meaning needs to be created or can be plumbed for deeper insights into one's own life or life in general.

This benchmark is both a prediction and an admonition. Typically, people in the 70% group will express this attitude. It is their most natural approach and what will probably work best for them. If for some reason they don't have that attitude, however, they might be well-advised to adopt it.

For those in the 30% group, the situation is vastly different. Even if vitality is strong, wellness is likely to be elusive. Illness is a given and frequently chronic. The strategies we would typically associate around dealing with illness are also fundamentally different. For these people, examining the entire life is essential to reveal factors from any realm of experience — tangible or intangible — that

may have contributed to illness or breakdown. In other words, answering the questions "*Why did this happen to me?*" and "*What does it tell me about myself?*" are at least as important as recovering, and sometimes even more so. The challenge is not simply to get well again or accept the limitations of permanent damage, but to use each illness or injury as a spiritual teaching to illuminate one's understanding of everything — oneself, others, and life in general.

The same duality of prediction and suggestion applies here for the 30%, as it did for the 70%. Exploring psycho-soma (the linkages that integrate mind, body, and spirit) to better understand wellness and illness is natural to the 30%. Should they not have that attitude, however, they would be well-advised to adopt it.

Endless variation applies in all this. For instance, significant transits may temporarily switch the group to which one naturally belongs. People in the practical, just-deal-with-it group may at times feel compelled to consider the meanings of wellness and illness, while those in the what-does-this-mean and where-did-it-come-from group might occasionally need to focus only on a practical and pragmatic approach to getting well. And not every natal chart implies a clear membership in one group or the other.

One area where this approach doesn't apply at all is in the wellness or illness that occur as part of an end of life scenario. What happens to each of us in our last chapter is often quite different from the life we lived earlier. Some people come to the end of their life-journeys largely intact and with relative ease. Their loss of vitality is gradual and graceful, without too many bumps or bruises. Other people are not so lucky, suffering the torments of the damned, sometimes for an extended period of harsh decline, increasing debility, and prolonged suffering. To assess that situation astrologically, I'd look more to the condition of the 4th and 8th houses.

To reiterate what I wrote earlier, this 1st/6th/12th house interpretive framework gives me something to offer clients that's potentially worthwhile without taking me too far into the weeds of medical diagnosis. I post this commentary in the hope that it might prove stimulating or useful to at least some of my readers in the assessment of health in their own or others' charts.

As always, I don't regard what I've written here as capital-T truth. It's not sacrosanct or cast in stone. This is just what works for me. Your mileage may vary, so accept, reject, or change it as you wish. And by all means, feel free to adapt it to your own needs or understanding.