

The Five Universal Shapes

What do you think they might be?

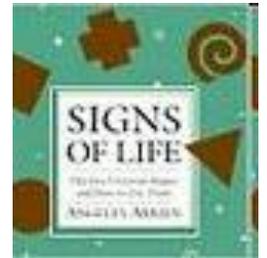
Signs of Life

Angeles Arrien is a cultural anthropologist who wrote a book in the early 90's called **Signs of Life**. She wondered if all cultures had common symbols in their art and what meanings were attributed to them. After seven years of study she discovered that five basic shapes appear in the art of all cultures: the circle, square, triangle, spiral and equidistant cross. From this research Arrien developed a **Preferential Shapes Test** as a tool for self discovery.



Five Basic Shapes in All Cultures

1. The Circle
2. The Equidistant Cross
3. The Spiral
4. The Triangle
5. The Square



The Preferential Shapes Test

- Draw the shapes on a piece of paper
- Now rank them according to preference. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Do not spend a lot of time thinking about the order.

After studying the art of many different cultures, Arrien discovered five universal shapes common to all of them. *The meanings attributed to the shapes describes universal aspirations, needs, and fears; each shape symbolizes a specific inner and outer experience relevant to humankind. (p. 29)*

CIRCLE: **Wholeness, completeness**

the process of individuation - the circle remains humankind's primary symbol for unity and stands for the mythic theme of individuation.

EQUIDISTANT CROSS: **Relationship**

This is a coupling, synthesizing, integrating and balancing process, which carries a need for connection - to a creative project, a group, another person, or oneself.

SPIRAL: **Growth and evolution**

a process of coming to the same point again and again, but at a different level, so everything is seen in a new light. Strong need for variety, novelty and change.

TRIANGLE: **Goals, visions, and dreams**

The triangle is associated with pyramids, arrowheads and sacred mountains.

An innate gift of vision may not be recognized.

Those involved in the triangle process have a great need to follow their dreams.

SQUARE: **Stability, solidity and security.**

The act of drawing a square mirrors the process of constructing a foundation.

Those attracted to the square are ready to build, to implement a plan and to manifest ideas.

The Significance of the Order

Not what you might expect...

Position 1 Where You Think You Are

The shape placed here signals the process that now has your attention.

It describes the part of yourself of which you are most aware...and most comfortable...at this time. However, it is not the most accurate indicator ... it only shows where you think you are or where you would like to be....it may mean you admire the qualities of the process it represents

Position 2 Your Strengths

The shape you have chosen as your second preference exhibits an inherent strength predominant in you at this time, whether you know it or not. The shape in this position indicates areas of your nature that are currently fluid, strong, and resourceful.

Position 3 Where You Are

This shape stands for the work that is really going on, at the core of your being.

You must be aware of it in order to fully manifest the potential it represents.

Think of Goldilocks ... when presented with multiple choices, the third choice was the best one for her (just right)

Position 4 Your Motivation

Position 4 points to past challenges that have motivated your current process of change.

The fourth position ...discloses the motivation that triggered your move into the core work to be done symbolized by the shape in Position 3.

Position 5 Old, Unfinished Business

This shape identifies a process you have outgrown or one that you dislike.

The fifth position is associated with unresolved issues you now wish to put aside and will reclaim at a later date.

HMMMMMMMM...