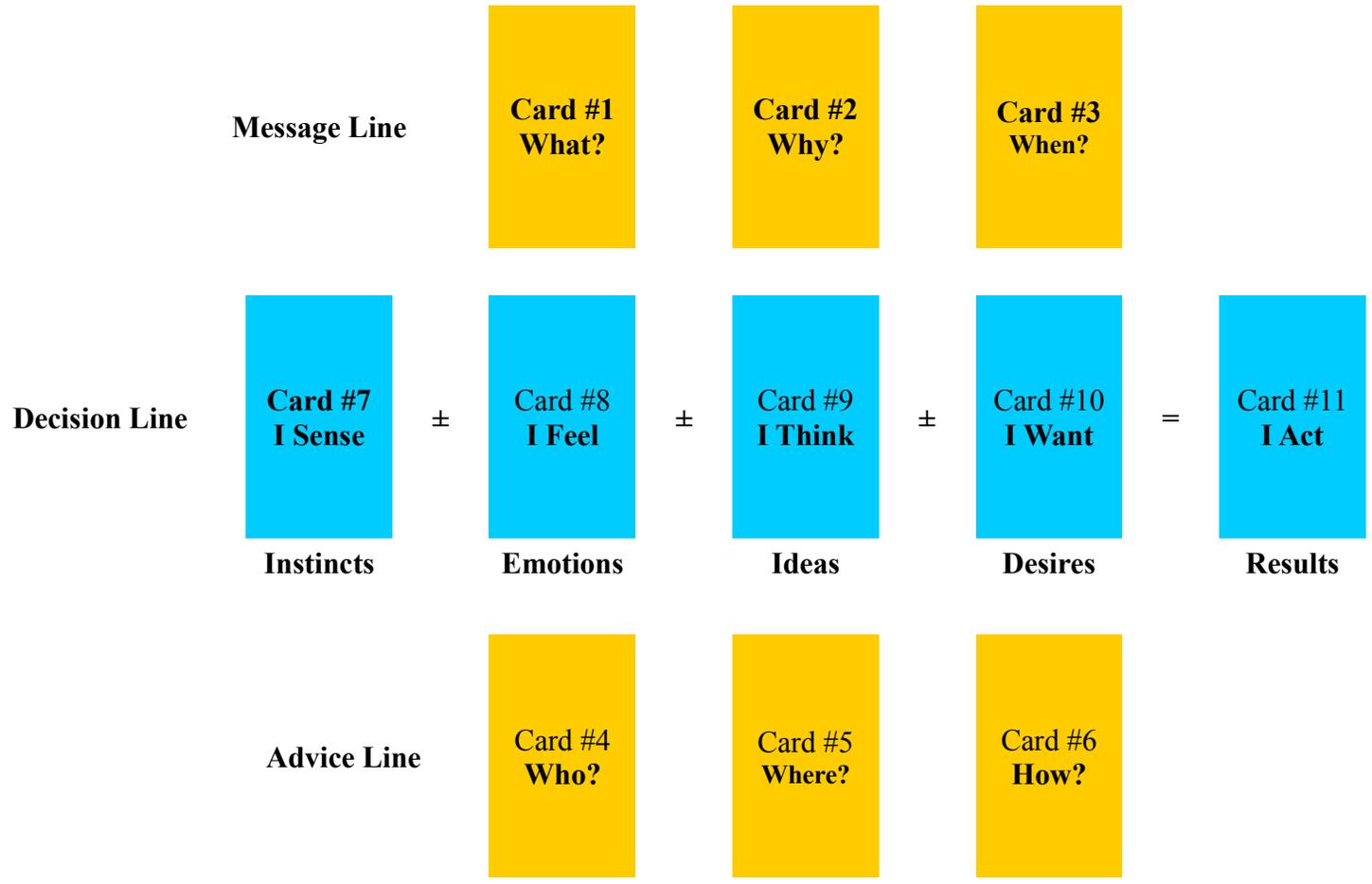


The “Five W's + 1” Decision Spread



WHAT is going on in this situation?
WHY is it the way it is?
WHEN can I expect things to change?

WHO should I ask for help, if needed?
WHERE will this situation play out?
HOW should I go about addressing it?

The Decision Line reflects the four elemental inputs to any decision to act: Instincts (Earth); Feelings (Water); Thoughts (Air) and Desires (Fire)

Most Americans “of a certain age” recall being taught the “Five W’s” in elementary school. Although this model related primarily to narrative structure in creative writing, it was also a rudimentary introduction to deductive reasoning. It was usually defined as “Who? What? Why? Where? And When?” “Who” was the protagonist, “What” was the situation, “Why” was the reason for its existence, “Where” was the location and “When” was the timing element. With the addition of “How” (as in how to react to the situation), this provides a reasonable approximation of one way to inquire of the tarot. In tarot-reading terms, we usually examine the “What,” “Why” and “How” in great detail; may touch on the “Who” if other people are involved and the cards (for example, court cards) pinpoint them; may occasionally be able to tell “When” with some precision when asked; and don’t much explore “Where” since most of the cards are too universal to flag a specific place (however, surrounding “environment” is frequently discernible). These “Five W’s +1” provide the situational background for development of an action plan, shown here by the “Decision Line.”

The top line (Cards #1 through #3) is treated as the “message” for the querent regarding the general circumstances and the approximate timing of their emergence. The bottom line (Cards #4 through #6) conveys advice for dealing with other people, environmental factors and the mechanics of resolution. The middle line (Cards #7 through #11) constitutes the main reading, in which four key psychological inputs to the querent’s response are blended as a build-up to the action phase denoting the outcome. The “plus/minus” signs between these positions are intended to show that a particular card in a given position may be strong or weak in its contribution to the plan, whether by elemental dignity (such as a Fire card in the Water position - weakened - or an Air card in the Fire position – strengthened), or by reversal. Strong cards would emphasize the role of their position in the overall developmental scheme, while weak cards would downplay that role. This would in turn drive how confidently the querent can pursue decisive action, or whether he or she must find less assertive ways to reach closure.

Reading this spread involves first assessing the “lay of the land” with Cards #1 through #6. These should be read as stage-setters for the four considerations that lead up to contemplating some kind of action. After interpreting the first six cards as a sentence-like “story,” the most productive way to merge them with the “decision” cards is to pair each of the six with one card from the middle row, in order. For example, “What do I sense instinctively about the situation?”; “What do I feel about the situation?”; “What do I think about the situation?”; “What do I want out of the situation?” Then move on to “Why do my senses tell me this?”; “Why do I feel this way?”; “Why do I think the way I do about it?”; etc. This will provide 24 individual bits of supporting information that “condition” the psychological “feeders” to the ultimate urge to act (or refrain from action, depending on the context of the question).

The first four cards in the “Decision Line” provide an inventory of the querent’s mental-emotional resources, with the fifth and final card showing the manner in which those resources can be put to work. The more formal use of Elemental Dignities in the middle line can provide additional shading to the psychological profile. The emotional nature (Card #8) may be either aligned or misaligned with the instincts (Card #7) and intellectual perceptions (Card #8) according to whether the cards in those positions are mutually friendly or unfriendly by element. The mental outlook (Card #9) may be either sharpened or defocused by the feelings (Card #8) and the desires (Card #10). The elemental quality of Card #11 should then be compared to that of each of the preceding four cards to see how well they can be expected to perform in concert. A powerful convergence of influences is assuring, a weak one is cautionary.