MERCURY RETROGRADE
SURVIVAL GUIDE

Know what to do, what to avoid, and how to turn this notoriously difficult time to your advantage!

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MERCURY RETROGRADE REFERENCE SHEET

WHAT IT IS- A retrograde is literally defined as going backwards. Planets do not technically move backward, however due to differences in the speed of movement within our solar system all planets except the Sun and Moon appear, from our perspective on earth, to Move backward at times. This is referred to as a retrograde. Of all the planets Mercury's retrograde has the strongest effect on our daily lives, and is by far the most well known.

FREQUENCY- Mercury Retrogrades occur approximately every three months, lasting for approximately three weeks.

PREPARATION - Catch up on paperwork, take care of details before a retrograde begins.

FOLLOW UP- After a retrograde, address issues that developed, check for errors in things you did, and watch for bad habits you may have developed.

PROBLEMS - Communication problems, misunderstandings, missing information; increased chance of accidents, delays, health problems; difficulty with locks or keys, animals, travel, computer or phone systems.

AVOID - Starting important projects; signing papers; making major purchases; making important decisions.

USES - Deep thinking, 'soul searching', inner understanding; generally most activities beginning with "re" reviewing, revising, restoring; or rethinking; catch up on things neglected for the past three months.
WHAT IS A MERCURY RETROGRADE?

Are you familiar with Mercury's retrograde cycle, when he reverses direction, and in turn reverses anything that was going smoothly here on Earth? If not, have you ever noticed a run of 'bad luck' when it just seems things don't go right, for you or anyone else, occurring about every 3 months and lasting for about 3 weeks? Just start paying attention to Mercury's retrograde dates, and you'll see what I mean!

So, just what is a Mercury retrograde? No, Mercury doesn't actually move backward. Mercury actually orbits around the Sun once every 88 days. In astronomical terms, it is always moving forward. However, in astrology we (usually) use what is called a geocentric system. This means that we study the motion of the planets as they appear from our perspective on Earth. As the Earth moves around the Sun much more slowly than Mercury, there are times when it seems as if he is moving backwards. He is actually completing his orbit around the Sun.

When it looks like Mercury is moving backwards, his effect is reversed. All planets (except the Sun and Moon) go through retrogrades, anywhere from a few weeks to a few months in length. However, Mercury's retrogrades are notorious, and with good reason.
THE COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

One classic definition of a Mercury retrograde is ‘communication breakdown’, and to sum it up in two words, that’s a pretty good description. Mercury rules communication, so this is by far the hardest hit area. During a Retrograde the mail goes astray, the delivery driver doesn’t have your package on the truck, and your morning paper lands in the neighbor’s driveway. You will forget things, make paperwork errors, make typos, get 'your tongue tangled up', misunderstand things… the list goes on and on, but you get the picture. This is a time to always, double check your facts, be careful of errors, and don’t sign anything if you can avoid it. Always try to get you paperwork in order, correspondence caught up, and details worked out before a Mercury retrograde. Anything of this nature that can be scheduled around those three weeks, either done in advance or postponed, should be.

During a Mercury retrograde isn’t the time for making speeches, having difficult conversations, or any situation where you want to make you point in a clear and concise manner. Nothing is clear and concise when Mercury is retrograde. Odds are, you won’t say quite the right thing, and others won’t take quite the right way. In any conversation remember the likelihood of miscommunication and misunderstandings. Mercury retrograde causes many unnecessary arguments, and sometimes even hard feelings between friends and loved ones due to innocent misunderstandings. When you start hearing or saying: "I know what you really meant!" "I wasn’t lying to you, I was sure that was accurate" "I would have sworn that's what you said" - thank Mercury.

Because Mercury has a direct effect on people's thought process, you may find yourself just unable to 'think straight', or worse yet, when you believe you are clear headed, and sharp minded, you’re really off in left field. Don’t make important decisions or plans during this time. Not only is your own thinking process at least somewhat altered, the facts aren’t all there. Mercury retrogrades are famous for missing information. You decide to plan your vacation. You have all the facts, you’ve double checked them, you are sure of yourself. Arrangements are made, you can afford it, - there are no flaws in your plan. Then, a couple of weeks later, you discover an envelope, unopened, that had fallen behind your desk. You open it and see a Jury Duty notification, the date is right in the middle of your scheduled trip to Mexico!

Communication refers to much more than speech and writing, any form of communication, or equipment used for communication is subject to Mercury’s dark cloud. This means, of course, computers for one. Back up your files before a Mercury retrograde, be extra careful of picking up viruses, and have some patience with your computer slowing down or having glitches. Computer networks and phone systems are often plagued with problems during a retrograde. You may find you often don’t get as good of cell phone or television reception, either. Be careful with your bills, you are equally likely to forget to pay one, or get over charged. Always keep your receipts for purchases you may have to return, or payments, that could get lost and never shown in your account.
EFFECTS BEYOND COMMUNICATION

Making major purchases isn't advisable during a Mercury retrograde either. If you buy a house 10 inspectors can check it and still miss a rotten foundation, or you may live there a week and realize you hate the neighborhood. Besides signing contracts, or any other papers of much importance is usually a mistake. Most likely either something will fall through, you will have missed or misunderstood some clause, or whatever purchase, deal, etc. the papers referred to will be perpetually problematic, with the details just never quite working out right. This applies to any project began during a Mercury retrograde. Because any project, new job, new business, trip - anything you begin has its own birth chart for that moment, it will carry the effects of a Mercury retrograde, even after he is direct.

There are many effects of a Mercury retrograde that aren't communication related. Accidents being one of them. Traffic is difficult in general during a retrograde with careless drivers, traffic jams, and frequently malfunctioning traffic lights. So it really isn't surprising that wrecks are more likely. However, traffic isn't the only area where accidents are likely to occur. People tend to trip, drop things, spill things, and sometimes things seem to fall apart with no help from humans. Appliances and machines in general are more likely to malfunction during a retrograde, although to a much lesser degree if the aren't communication related. However, Mercury has a particular affinity with locks and keys. Don't be surprised if your lock jams, and be sure you know where your extra set of keys are, in case you lose them.

Do you have pets? If so, you are aware they can make your life rather chaotic at times, especially if they live in the house. During a Mercury retrograde is one of those times. Because Mercury rules domestic animals they are particularly susceptible to his influence. Besides having the same tendency toward confusion and misunderstanding as their human friends, animals tend to get contrary and sometimes eccentric. This is when the normally well behaved pet decides to act up, and the not so well behaved ones get worse. The housebroken puppy forgets his training, and the lazy cat climbs the drapes. The horse decides to escape her pen and the parrot learns foul language.

There is a strong connection between Mercury and health. If you must go to a doctor for diagnosis during a Mercury retrograde, get a second (third and fourth) opinion. It's difficult to get a correct diagnosis, and you are likely to develop one or two symptoms not related to your problem, just to make it more confusing. Don't have an optional surgery either or at least part of it will probably have to be redone. Be careful with health in general, as not only injuries from accident, but other health problems are more likely. Conversely, if you have a medical problem that doctors have been unable to diagnose, you might fare better during a Mercury retrograde, when everyone looks at things a little differently.
IT'S NOT ALL BAD!

I don't know of anyone who thinks a Mercury retrograde is fun, but I don't mean to make it sound like it's all bad. These are just necessary warnings, but nothing in life is all good or all bad, and every natural cycle has its purpose.

So what is good or useful about a Mercury retrograde? The phenomenon occurs because (from our view on earth) Mercury is never too far from the Sun. However, he moves so fast that he catches up with and passes the Sun. Then he stops for a brief moment (this is called the station) and turns around, retracing the area he sped through. When he reaches his destination, he again stops momentarily and turns direct again.

Following his path, sometimes that is what we need to do. This is a time to review, revise, and redo. Do you notice these things all begin with re-, just like retrograde? The natural energies are reversed and internal rather than forward and external. Unfortunately, in this external and progress oriented world, life must go on. You can’t always avoid everything that’s a bad idea during a Mercury retrograde. That is why there are so many cautions about Mercury’s retrograde periods. Be careful with what you do, and don’t set yourself up for a fall with high expectations (or literally with carelessness and clumsiness, common occurrences during this time). You will find that with some practice you can avoid much more of the problem areas than you think, even though you can’t completely avoid them. And if you focus on the type of things a Mercury retrograde is naturally inclined towards, it will be productive in the long run (still not pleasant though). The secret is living with, and letting your life flow with the natural planetary energies, rather than fighting against them. The planets will win; they are bigger than you are.

Look around you; what have you been neglecting, rushing past and need to catch up? If you’re prepared for the retrograde it’s not paperwork, correspondence or things of that nature. But what about household chores, minor repairs, spending time with family and friends, or putting away holiday decorations (or seasonal items, depending on the time of the year)? What bad habits have you developed or good habits have you dropped recently? As the saying goes "As above, So below..." we are in tune with the planetary energies, whether we know it or not, and on the same path in some form. If you look around and think about it, inevitably, by the time Mercury goes retrograde you will have things in your life you have skipped over and rushes past. When forward momentum and progress is not going well is the perfect time to take a step back.

Of course don’t make firm decisions right now, but minor changes and gather ideas for later. Take notes and write lists freely, you are likely to have a lot of valuable ideas, but forget them by the time you can go over them with a clear head or implement them. Whatever plans you haven’t been able to work out or ideas you just couldn’t make feasible, now you are looking at them from a different angle. Do your routines and scheduling need some revision? Try minor changes, and keep track of ideas for major changes or new projects and new things you want to do.
Any planet in retrograde has a tendency to turn their energies inward, that’s part of the reason we are so out of touch and confused with the world around us. That’s not really where our attention is naturally focused, just where it has to be directed. When you have time alone, or opportunity for deep thinking, do some soul searching. You’ll probably notice the retrograde makes you moody and whimsical, perhaps nostalgic. Your subconscious mind is more active, and there is an underlying awareness of your inner thoughts. Those things you push you the back of your mind and won’t think about are pushing back. You have a different perspective on yourself and your life. This is a time for reflection. Don’t make any life changing decisions, but let yourself contemplate them. Let yourself contemplate all the things you normally refuse to think about, and the things that hadn’t even occurred to you until now. When Mercury is direct again, you will see things a little different and realize a few points that you were missing. You will also realize some of what you thought is perfectly valid and accurate. You just hadn’t looked at it that way until the retrograde.
MERCURY RETROGRADE AND THE BUSINESS WORLD

A Mercury retrograde is particularly difficult for the business world, where much revolves around communication, and the use of communication devices. Daily business can't be put on hold for three weeks. If you quit answering the phones, billing your customers, replying to correspondence and so forth, you will quickly go out of business. Often very important meetings, projects, and activities cannot be rescheduled, either due to circumstances or unwillingness of others involved. However, keeping Mercury’s cycle in mind, a great deal of problems can be avoided or lessened with careful scheduling when possible, and extra attention to detail.

The first step is to be prepared. It is advisable to know the dates of the next year's retrogrades, and refer to them in long-term planning. Major projects should not be started during a retrograde if it can possibly be avoided. This is especially important in areas heavily relying on communication (such as marketing campaigns) or organization (such as re-structuring). In long-term planning, it is best to use the retrograde time-frame for revision of such projects, but not finalize until Mercury is direct again. When it is unavoidable to begin major projects or development during a retrograde, be prepared for the resulting difficulties. Missing information or inaccurate information can create some of the biggest problems. If the beginning date must be during a retrograde, make sure you have verified the information, have related files accounted for and organized etc. in advance. The other serious problem with this timing is that anything begun during a retrograde had those tendencies ingrained into it, as anything with a definitive start time has a 'birth chart' just like a person. Any business, or new branch or office of an existing company began during a retrograde has a seriously decreased chance of success. Prepare for communication, accounting, and staffing difficulties. If an important meeting must be scheduled during a retrograde, make extra allowances for time, as people tend to run late. Also consider what you are going to do if a vital attendee (including yourself) is not present for some unforeseeable reason. In general, if anything important must be started during a Mercury retrograde, prepare for disorganization and miscommunication to be problematic with that project. Also, make a plan B (and probably C, D ...) because there will most likely be unforeseen glitches.

In your more short term planning, always make time to catch up on paperwork and organize your office before a Mercury retrograde. As much as possibly have your schedule for that time frame worked out, and try to allow yourself a little extra time to make it to appointments and be sure that the other party has confirmed. Have employee scheduling ready, and don't be understaffed during that time frame. Any correspondence or computer work that can be done in advance, do it. Make sure computer files are backed up and paper files are accounted for and in a safe place. Inventory your supplies and try to have extra on hand, as orders are more likely to be delayed or wrong items sent. If you will be traveling during the retrograde, be very careful in confirming your plans; travel is usually quite difficult. Check on overdue or almost due bills (either owed by or owed to your company), if possible straighten it out before the retrograde, and if not make a note to keep a close eye on it.
During a Mercury retrograde, the best advice is generally be careful. Remember that anything you do during the retrograde is more likely to need to be re-done (at least partially) later. Double check any paper or computer work for errors, and keep an eye on your accounting and billing departments. Always remember the effect of miscommunication applies to verbal as well. Try not to have meetings or give speeches, but if you must be careful of your wording. Try to know in advance what you want to say and how you want to say it. Most people have a strong tendency to become easily sidetracked, and it would be easy to forget some points you want to make, or approach it in such a roundabout way that your audience misses the point. During a Mercury retrograde, there is a likelihood of being misunderstood even if you were clear, so pay attention to others’ responses and try to clear up misunderstandings on the spot. If you give a presentation and are received with blank expressions, they probably didn’t understand, or if you give someone a compliment and get a scowl in return they probably thought you were being sarcastic. Remember, this goes two ways, be careful that you have correctly understood information or suggestions presented to you before acting or re-acting.

Always make plenty of notes before and during a retrograde, and be careful not to lose them. Even if you are not normally prone to forgetfulness, it will be more likely now so reminders are helpful. Also, remember a Mercury retrograde gives you and others a different perspective on everything (even if you don’t realize it). It can produce some good ideas and potential solutions to ongoing problems. However if you try to implement them while the retrograde is active you will encounter glitches and probably discover some important factors were overlooked. Make notes and wait until Mercury has gone direct again to implement or finalize. In general, during a retrograde can be an excellent time for reviewing, and revising with caution. Many of the problems associated with a retrograde actually stem from existing problems and disorganization; the retrograde can help you see where these problems exist by pointing them out through 'Murphy’s Law’. Also the general tendency is to look back, so as much as possible spend your time reviewing policies, procedures, and plans. Make minor adjustments now, and make notes about possible major changes down the road.

After a Mercury retrograde has ended, as soon as possible check your paperwork, computer files and accounting for whatever errors slipped past you. They will be much easier to find now. Then begin going over your notes made during the retrograde and begin consolidating and finalizing. Double check the facts used for any plans or decisions you had made, as some of them have probably changed or were inaccurate and can now be clarified. It typically takes about two weeks after a retrograde has ended for errors made to be discovered and resulting problems to finish surfacing. This time-frame after a retrograde is also the best time for reviewing and consolidating notes made and ideas developed during the retrograde.