



HARMONY AT HOME

Enhance your space with the art and science of feng shui

BY DR. JOSEPH MARTIN

The way you arrange your living space impacts your entire life, according to principles of feng shui. If your home environment is a jumble of haphazardly placed furniture, chances are that your relationships, finances and emotions will be just as chaotic. Feng shui (pronounced “fung shway”) can be used to create a happy, healthy, harmonious home for the people and pets dwelling in it. This Chinese discipline enhances your life energy (called chi) according to how your home is decorated. Its simple and inexpensive techniques can create a sense of peace immediately after changes are made. As an international feng shui consultant, I have clients who called me the day after a consultation saying, “Wow! Whatever you did, I can feel the difference.” They slept better, felt better, and became more motivated.

Feng shui is not a superstition or set of standard guidelines. It is the art and science of understanding both the forces of nature and your own intuitive needs in order to design homes that increase the flow of positive energy while avoiding negative energy. Natural energy is always flowing around you but it's often blocked and cannot be properly utilized. Feng shui teaches how to open a space up and allow this chi, like air, light and

water, to move through and revitalize it.

Put this 5,000-year-old philosophy – updated for the 21st century – to work in your home.

Clear clutter: A cluttered, unclean environment keeps energy stale and stagnant. Get it flowing by discarding, donating and recycling anything no longer useful. It prepares you for a positive attitude shift to transform your house, and move into your next life adventure. Outer clutter reflects inner mental clutter – having too many things on your mind and in your environment to be open to what's happening in the moment. I go through each room detail by detail marking with yellow “stickies” which objects the client and I decide will be removed. They often have twice as much furniture and paintings as they need, which creates a feeling of claustrophobia and makes it harder to move through the room. If we can physically move these items out, they're stored in the garage or basement so homeowners can immediately feel the difference. After I've taken out couches, chairs, lamps and paintings they often breathe a sigh of relief.

Ventilation: Lots of light, good ventilation, cleanliness and space are essential to a proper functioning room. A metaphor: after washing your dishes, you empty the dirty water, but what if you left that water sitting in your kitchen sink and kept washing your dishes in the same water for a week? A house that isn't cleansed of stale air and dead energy flow is the same. No wonder you feel lethargic or depressed! Fresh air brings fresh ideas (by increasing brain function), not only

cleansing physical dust, but emotional dust. Keep windows open, and once every day open your front door to let chi and oxygen flow in.

Light: Natural light is very important – most houses in Canada are far too dark. Skylights, bigger windows, open spaces, and more pot lights are good to ensure that you have enough light. Mirrors, if reflecting natural light, are good to increase space but it's tricky to get what else is reflected in them right. Don't put mirrors in bedrooms or facing the front door.

Colour: Freshen chi by changing colours each season with bedspreads, rugs, paintings, pillows, slipcovers and seasonal plants (kept healthy). Particular colours are better for certain rooms. In Chinese “yin-yang” principles, closely linked to feng shui, “yang” characterizes moving, active, masculine chi that you want to allow to flow through the house, and “yin” is receptive, relaxed, feminine chi. Most rooms should be bright, warm, strong yang colours, but the bedroom should have soft yin colours for sleep. Colour choices need to be personalized, not necessarily feng shui formulas. A tip: Feature one strong accent wall and three walls in pale shades of the same colour for proper chi.

Objects in a room: According to feng shui, energy flows through odd numbers of accessories in a grouping, rather than even ones – primarily one, three or five objects. Whether these are objects on a dining table, counter or mantel, paintings on a wall, or mats on a floor, odd numbers are yang numbers that lead to harmony and balance. The only time to use an even number (signifying a “couple”) is in the bedroom to enhance romance and a lasting relationship.

In the bathroom: Bathrooms are a water element, the wealth element. Help prevent a loss of chi, and opportunities, by keeping the bathroom door and toilet lid closed when not in use. Don't allow dripping faucets – a sign of wasting money – or dirty fixtures to be a part of your bathroom. Keep drain plugs closed or your wealth is said to go down the drain. These practices also simply make you feel more comfortable.

In the bedroom: You spend a third of your life in your bedroom so it affects you more than any other room. Take time to create the



TOP: An uncluttered room with plenty of light and healthy plants can help increase the energy flow in your home.



BOTTOM: This bedroom is a restful oasis with pale colours and cosy furnishings. Note the “yang” odd-numbered grouping of artwork above the bed.



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perfect oasis, especially if your health or relationship needs improvement. Don't place anything electrical near or on your bed (such as an electric blanket or television). Ensure lighting is not too harsh (yang) or too dim (yin). Placement of the bed should never be under a window; the foot should never be pointing toward the door (creating unease); the head should face west because the sun rises up from the east, thus energizing you, and sets in the west, so good for nighttime sleep. In a small room, paint walls lighter, brighter shades, take out excess furniture, increase lighting, and add cosier furnishings that are relaxing to ease claustrophobia.

Floor plan: Straight lines such as narrow, maze-like or dark hallways, hallways that extend from front to back of the house and steep stairways near an entrance are bad feng shui. Remedy them by "slowing down chi" with a table, plant or other object that energy can circulate around. However, don't allow obstructions in front of a doorway to block your path. No corners of tables or other pointed edges should be facing you when you stand or sit, which can bring disharmony. Feng shui generates safety and comfort. Eating is a private function so dining and cooking shouldn't be near a front door and chair backs should never be facing a door – you won't feel completely at ease. Bathrooms shouldn't be located in front of or beside the entry. Bedrooms should be to the back of the house with children's bedrooms upstairs, never in the basement.

Feng shui can save you thousands of dollars in renos by inexpensively improving the house, and even avoid costly renovation mistakes if you don't understand your home's feng shui. As a former professor of anthropology and psychology, I enjoy teaching others how to harness the power of these ancient traditions so crucial to well-being in stressful modern times. Feng shui creates sanctuary, a house that supports inspiration, relaxation, fun and romance. In my new book, launching this spring, called *Prepping™: Combining the Modern Art and Science of Feng Shui, Vaastu and Staging to Get Houses Sold*, I walk you through your home, room by room, co-creating this sanctuary by examining its energy flow. ■



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