

Clearing the Clutter

The Psychology of Place Inside and Out

Shirley Vanderbilt

What's cluttering your life? Is it the stuff in the corner of the bedroom, or the stuff in the corner of your mind? What are you tolerating that keeps you from expressing your true self? Authors Bruce and Lou Stewart say that clutter--both in our environment and our mind--is stagnating, blocking the free-flow of energy, or chi, in our homes and lives. Whether we're detouring around a box in the living room or repeating a negative pattern in our head, it's time to clear the path.

In their new book, "Your Way Home--The Psychology of Place Inside and Out," the Stewarts present a unique approach to clutter-clearing by combining Lou's expertise in feng shui

bring balance between the inner and outer sanctums by clarifying our core, or essential self, and allowing our environment to reflect and support our core values.

Making the Connection

When the Stewarts first blended their feng shui and NLP skills together in workshop presentations, they noticed it was easier for people to clear their environment when they were connected to their core.

"It really is a cycle," Lou says. "The environment and our core are reflections of one another. When we know our core, it's much easier to

Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip.

-Will Rogers

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Clearing space--inside and out--can help us get in touch with our core selves.

with Bruce's mastery of neurolinguistic programming (NLP). While feng shui has to do with external placement and structure, NLP is a psychological approach that addresses our internal structure of mind, body, emotion, and spirit. With feng shui, we can free energy flow by rearranging the room; with NLP tools, we can do the same thing with our mind. The goal is to

understand our environment." But it's a chicken and egg thing, actually. Either one can work as a start.

Also a bodyworker, Lou says, "What feng shui and NLP do for the body's environment is so similar to what a massage will do for the body, flushing

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the system of blockages. When I go through a person's home or office, what I'm doing is very similar to when I first put my hands on a client." In the process of combing through to find blockages in the environment, she will ask the client about particular objects. "Nine out of 10 times it is incongruent with who they want to be right now. They've gotten numb to it, and it sticks out just like a knot in a muscle. The energy is different."

NLP recognizes that each of us has developed our own individual style of communicating and processing information which results in the patterning in our brain and the ways in which we express ourselves through language and body movement. Sometimes our set patterns do not support who we are at our essential core, but we can change that. Through the core work of NLP exercises, Bruce says, you can discover what you truly identify with and have a better understanding of yourself. At that point, you may find that your goals for your life have changed. It's this clarity of sense of self that is essential to creating an environment that supports and nourishes who you are and what you value in life.

You don't have to be trained in feng shui or have a personal consultant to implement the concepts of this ancient art, nor is an NLP practitioner required to help you find your core. Throughout their book, the Stewarts offer practical exercises for applying the principles of NLP and feng shui to begin the clearing process. "In feng shui, when the chi of an environment is balanced, it allows the movement of the occupant to be well supported, just like when circulation is pumping well and is unclogged," Lou says. "With NLP, it's the same thing -- running through patterns in the mind, flushing out old phobias and patterns that are either negative or destructive."

Ready to Start?

If you're ready to start clearing out the clutter, there are some simple ways to begin. The Stewarts define clutter as "anything you no longer use, love, or need." So if you don't use it, but still love it, keep it. Keep your target areas small, and limit the time you spend at the task to avoid feeling overwhelmed. And as you examine your "stuff,"

consider how it fits with your core, your essential self. Does it support who you are at this moment, or is it a reflection of something in the past you're ready to release? Is the item pleasing to your senses? What fits with your individual way of experiencing the world?

"If you're particularly visual and like arts and crafts, you feel more comfortable with that around," Bruce says. "Someone who is very kinesthetic may not care how it looks but will want the chair to be comfortable."

Once the path is cleared, you can use the principles of feng shui to further enhance harmony and positive flow in your life. But the process involves more than hanging a mirror or installing a water fountain. As with NLP, it has to do with our core self and our intention. "Where attention goes, the energy flows. That's what it boils down to," Lou says.

"As we focus our intentions, then our conscious and subconscious mind can connect, and when they connect with our body and our emotions and our spiritual core, then the intention is strengthened significantly." Think of it as a vinyl record with no grooves. "There's no music," she adds. "What our intentions do is they create that pathway on the record. So then we have the choice: Are we going to make it a smooth groove or a bumpy groove? Intention is our tool."

Bodywork is the perfect complement for this process, helping to center, ground, and clear the body and mind. Clearing the clutter helps you excavate your true self and the person you want to become.

For more information on clearing the clutter, contact Lou and Bruce Stewart at info@louandbruce.com or visit their website at www.louandbruce.com.



Using feng shui in your home can facilitate a tranquil environment and a calm mind.

What Is Reiki?

Understanding Energy Work

A type of energy bodywork, reiki (pronounced ray-key) relies on the ancient belief in the life force energy, referred to as chi, that flows through all things. This life force runs throughout pathways in the body called meridians, nourishing organs and cells and supporting vital functions. When this energy is disrupted by negative thoughts, feelings or actions, illness and disease result. A reiki practitioner's hands hover just above a person's body, sensing the affected areas and infusing them with positive flow. This raises the energetic vibration and breaks up the negativity to heal, clear and restore the natural flow of the life force. The reiki practitioner, trained to access and serve as a channel for the life energy, places his hands on or just above the client's body and uses a passive touch that some clients experience with warmth or tingling. The hands remain in position for 3-5 minutes, alternately covering 10-12 positions over the body.

Thought to be Tibetan Buddhist in origin, the practice of reiki is comprised

of three levels of training. Through this training, the practitioner learns how to access energy flow through the hands to heal. Completion of the third and highest level of training results in the title of reiki master. Reiki is used to accelerate healing, assist the body in cleansing toxins, balance the flow of subtle energy by releasing blockages, and help the client contact the healer within.

According to www.reiki.org, reiki is beginning to gain acceptance as a meaningful and cost-effective way to improve patient care in hospitals and clinics across America. In an interview on the website, Dr. David Guillion, an oncologist at Marin General Hospital in California, says, "I feel we need to do whatever is in our power to help the patient. We provide state of the art medicine in our office, but healing is a multidimensional process. I endorse the idea that there is a potential healing that can take place utilizing energy." For more information, consult your bodywork practitioner.



Reiki balances subtle but vital energy.

High Time for Tea

Discover the Healing Properties of Taking Tea

The health research is enough to make you forego the latte for strong brewed tea instead. Name your color -- black, white, green, even red -- teas are packed with disease-preventing antioxidants (more than some fruits and vegetables) and contain vitamins, minerals, and at least half the caffeine of coffee.

Fortified with free radical-fighting polyphenols, tea drinkers have a reduced risk of many different cancers, in particular stomach, colorectal, and even skin cancer. Tea drinkers also have a lower risk of heart disease, stroke, and high cholesterol. Containing anti-inflammatory and arthritis-preventing properties, tea also helps stimulate the immune system and protect the liver against toxins.

But you have to drink up. Most research points to five or so cups of brewed tea each day to reap the health benefits. Decaf tea loses some but not much of its health punch, due to extra processing.

All traditional tea -- white, green, oolong, and black -- is derived from the leaves of an evergreen tree called the *Camellia sinensis*, and all contain the health-promoting polyphenols. White tea is made from young tea leaves, dried in the sun without fermentation or processing. Green tea is dried with hot air after picking, so it retains its color but is not fermented. Oolong tea, sometimes referred to as "brown" tea, is fermented but not processed to the point of black tea. Black tea, on the other hand, is fully fermented, which

accounts for the color of the leaves and its stronger flavor.

Rooibos, or red tea, is naturally caffeine-free and from the *Aspalathus linearis*, a shrub that grows only at high altitude near Cape of Good Hope in South Africa.

Herbal teas are made from a variety of plants, roots, bark, seeds, and flowers and are technically herbal infusions rather than tea. Though they don't contain the same antioxidants and haven't received the same research-based accolades as traditional tea, the herbs in these infusions have certain healing properties that have been used for centuries to treat many common health issues.

*Whatever words
we utter should
be chosen with
care, for people
will hear them
and be
influenced by
them, for good
or ill.*

-Buddha

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