

DENISE LINN

Bestselling author of *Sacred Space*

FENG

SHUI

FOR THE SOUL

**How to create a harmonious
environment that will nurture
and sustain you**

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About Denise Linn

Denise Linn is an international lecturer, healer, and author at the forefront of the Feng Shui movement in the U.S., Europe, and Australia. She is the acknowledged pioneer of the Space Clearing movement that has gained so much popularity throughout the world. Her bestselling book, *Sacred Space*, has been translated into 12 languages. She is the originator of the groundbreaking Interior Alignment™ Feng Shui and Space Clearing system, and founder of the Interior Alignment™ Institute which offers a professional certification course and weekend workshops.



Also by Denise Linn

Books

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Dream Lover (1990)
Past Lives, Present Dreams (1994)
Sacred Space (1995)
Signposts (1996)
Quest (1997)
Descendants (1998)—reissued as *Sacred Legacies* (1999)
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Space Clearing A–Z (2001)
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SOUL

How to Create a Harmonious Environment
That Will Nurture and Sustain You

Denise Linn



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*I dedicate this book to
Interior Alignment™ Feng Shui practitioners
throughout the world*

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Note from the Hay House editor to American readers: This book was originally published in England, so some of the spellings and syntax reflect the British use of the English language. However, your appreciation of the content should not be affected. Thank you!

Introduction

AS A CHILD I moved house nine times. My roots would begin to take hold in a new place, only to be abruptly ripped up once again. None the less I grew like a weed, taking root wherever we lived. There didn't seem to be a common thread connecting the various places; each one was completely different.

My first home was a small wooden house atop a hill in Astoria, Oregon – a rainy fishing village by the Pacific Ocean. The house overlooked the sea, rolling mists and fog. A later move took us to the dry, arid heat of King City, California, where we lived in abandoned army barracks. Whenever we needed more space my dad would knock down a wall, opening up another unit. Later we moved to Chicago and lived in a run-down tenement apartment. The fluorescent lights from the 'greasy spoon' coffee shop on the street below blinked endlessly into my bedroom window every night.

Better times in my father's career took us to a beautiful Tudor-style home in a middle-class neighbourhood near Chicago. After this we moved to a rural region of Ohio, where we lived in an old farmhouse surrounded by an overgrown apple orchard.

Later, I lived for two years with my grandparents near Los Angeles. Their home was a suburban bungalow in a transitional neighbourhood that was slowly being infiltrated by gangs. By my high school years, we lived on a gracious tree-lined street in a mid-sized town in Ohio. Our three-storey historical house had marble window seats, hand-carved woodwork, antique stained-glass windows, and an intricately patterned slate roof.

Disruptive as it was for a child to be uprooted so many times, I now know that every move we made prepared me for practising and teaching feng shui. The wide spectrum of environments that I called home when I was growing up gave me an intimate understanding of the spaces we occupy and how they influence us.

This understanding was accelerated by a near-death experience. When I was seventeen, a traumatic random meeting with a crazed gunman left me in critical condition, in an intensive-care unit of a hospital. I had been riding my motorbike on a country road, when I was run into and then shot by a man who had shot several other people. A farmer found me on the side of the road and took me to the nearby hospital. While the doctors were frantically trying to save my life, something remarkable happened: I floated out of my body and entered into a realm of golden radiant light. I was surrounded by a loving force that appeared to be infusing the entire universe with vitality and energy. It all felt so very familiar. I 'remembered' knowing that I was connected to all people and all life, animate and inanimate. I felt that this was something I had always known, but had forgotten. I was eventually pulled back into my physical body, but from that point onward I saw the world through different eyes.

Human beings usually experience the world around them as comprising separate parts thrown together in a jumble of colour, sound and form. But this is an illusion. At death's gateway, I had an experience of not being separate from the world. In that exquisite moment I knew that we are all one with the sea, the mountains, and all creatures on this beautiful planet.

This awareness eventually propelled me towards the study of feng shui. I found this ancient tradition provided keys to access the rhythm of the ebb and flow of the natural world. By using feng shui principles to organise and clear living spaces, people could live more in oneness and balance with the environment.

In my book *Sacred Space*, I sought to unravel some of the mysteries of space clearing and feng shui and to demonstrate how anyone could create harmony at home. Since its publication I have had

deepening realisation of how important it is that our homes are not only retreats for our bodies but also, in the profoundest sense, homes for our souls.

In *Feng Shui for the Soul*, you will find three approaches for transforming your dwelling into a environment for spiritual renewal and inner poise. Each approach is discussed in a separate section of the book. Taken together, the three parts provide a blueprint for creating environments of harmony and beauty.

The first section focuses on developing your aptitude for instinctive feng shui. Everyone has the ability intuitively to pinpoint exactly what is out of balance at home or at work, and then cure it. Because this ability has been blocked in most people, I have provided information and exercises for accessing this innate power. By unlocking your intuition and working through blockages surrounding home issues, you can understand the deeper meaning of your home. You will learn how to feng shui your home or workplace easily and in a way that brings remarkable results. The ensuing transformation will affect not only you, but everyone who lives with you and enters your environment.

The second section of this book presents little-known information on how to activate the forces of nature within your home. Living in an environment without the energetic signatures of nature separates us from our deepest heritage and reduces our life force, slowly but surely. Re-establishing our connection to nature in our living spaces is vital to our physical and spiritual health.

The third part of *Feng Shui for the Soul* is based on the ancient understanding of the importance of the Medicine Wheel, the four elements of nature and the four directions. Utilising the power of these traditions empowers the energy fields in your home and calls spirit into your life.

Writing this book has been an exciting process for me. My comprehension of feng shui and sacred alignment has become deeper and, at the same time, fresher for me. I have written this book because I want to help you create a place where your soul is nurtured, so that you can feel at home with yourself wherever you are, and be at home in the universe.



Part One

**A HOME FOR
THE SOUL**



1

Creating a Home for the Soul

TWENTY YEARS AGO my husband and I, and our two-year-old daughter, squeezed together into our Dodge pickup truck to move to Seattle. Every one of our possessions was piled on to that truck. Our mattress, roped on top of the load, flapped dangerously in the wind as we tottered down the highway. It seemed like a great adventure.

It was a rainy cold November day when we arrived at last in Seattle. We had very little money and nowhere to stay, so we immediately began looking for rented accommodation. We finally found a bungalow not far from Lake Washington. It was so tiny that what I mistook for a walk-in cupboard turned out to be the bedroom. We moved our household goods in, and we were home. David found work as a carpenter and I decided to stay home with Meadow. For a while everything was exciting and new, then slowly I became depressed. Every day was rainy, overcast and cold. I didn't have any friends in the area and David was away all day. I felt so alone and miserable. Not only were the skies grey, but the walls of our little home were grey. It seemed like my life was grey too. I doubted myself. I doubted my mothering skills. I doubted everything about my life.

Then one day I found some tall branches dumped in the alley. I dragged them home, propped them up in the living room so that they extended from floor to ceiling, and wove tiny Christmas-tree lights through them. They looked great. The feeling of the room changed entirely. I loved the effect; it reminded me of a starry night in the forest. I noticed that I felt a lot better after I had done that.

Next I bought an inexpensive large round rice-paper lantern to hang in front of my 'forest'. I painted it a luminous colour so it would look like the full moon in the forest. When night fell, I turned off all the lights in the house and switched on my 'stars' and my 'moon'. It was magical. I felt so happy and uplifted. The little grey bungalow had turned into a sanctuary of beauty ... it had become home for my soul. This marked a turning point in our life together there. I continued to find odds and ends in thrift stores and began to assemble a home environment that was warm and inviting. Joy emerged in my life and my spirit blossomed.

Our homes have an enormous impact on our state of mind. They can make us feel as though we are plunging into the depths of despair, or they can be uplifting havens of beauty and rejuvenation. I believe the soul yearns for places of sanctuary and balance, ones that provide authentic reminders of what is truly important in life. It longs for dwellings that are in harmony with the cycles of nature, places where kindness, compassion and wisdom are cherished...and where these qualities can grow. It has been many years since we moved from our little home with the 'moonlit forest', but I have always remembered how changing my environment made such a deep and lasting change in my life.

One of the ways we can create soulful places is through the use of feng shui. This ancient art shows

us how to make our homes harmonious and balanced. The type of feng shui that most people are familiar with originated in China. However, every ancient culture has had rituals, myths and other traditions based on the fact that our living spaces profoundly affect our wellbeing. The intent of all these ancient systems has been to create environments which are in equilibrium with the forces of the universe.

Our yearning for places that nourish the soul, as well as the body, accounts for the rapid growth of feng shui in recent years. In my feng shui practice and in my classes, people invariably ask me how to create a feeling of sanctuary. They want to bring a sense of the sacred into their homes and workplaces. They want to know how to create a home for their soul.

The soul

Soul is a word we use to describe the central or integral part of something; it is the vital core. In its most profound sense, it also describes the essence of every human being. It is that place within each of us that is infinite, eternal and universal. The soul is an enigma, a part of what Native Americans call the Great Mystery, which is the creative force underlying the universe. It is a source that gives rise to form, yet is unknowable. It is illusive by its very nature, yet it also must be nurtured and cared for. We can intuitively understand what its needs are, yet never fathom its depths. It is the substance within us that links our body and spirit to the greater forces of the cosmos.

The closest I have come to directly experiencing my soul was through the near-death incident that occurred when I was seventeen. It resulted in the realisation that I was more than just a physical body. I knew I had a soul.

Ever since that turning point, much of my life has been focused on recapturing the deep sense of belonging and connection that I experienced in those few moments on the other side of life. For many years I searched for ways to reconnect to that sacred place. I studied many traditions and travelled throughout the world, always yearning to find the pathway back to that place. At last I realised that it was in me all the time, and that by aligning the energy in my home I could create a spiritual temple to help carry me to the centre of my soul. And anyone can do this. With a few very simple techniques you can use your home as a template to reconnect to the sacred element in your life. You can create a home that will allow your potential to blossom and your heart to open.

WHAT YOUR SOUL NEEDS IN A HOME

I believe that there are four things that the soul requires in a home. First, it needs a sense of belonging to feel truly connected to the land, to your roots, to your spirit. Second, a soul needs to feel safe, so that you can be yourself, be creative, and bring forth what you are without fear. Third, it yearns for harmony with the greater cycles of nature. And, finally, your soul needs sacred space. When you have these four things, your home will be filled with inner peace. It will become a gateway into deeper spiritual realms.

1 A sense of belonging

For your soul to feel balanced and happy it is essential to find a place on the planet where you feel

truly at home. In my life, I have had the opportunity to spend time with native people in countries around the world. In every location I have found that these people have a profound attachment to their land. Passion comes into their voices when they talk of their ancestral home sites. Their connection to their place on earth forms the very fabric of their soul. In some earth-based cultures, a newborn child is placed on the soil to instill a sense of symbolic connection between the child and the sacred earth. This way, even when life is hard, there is always a deep sense of belonging.

People in modern Western cultures move on average approximately once every five years. I believe that this results in a loss of a sense of belonging, which is felt as a subliminal malaise. In ancient times native people did not usually suffer from depression and the lack of self-esteem that modern people do. In part, this can be attributed to the fact that they had a sense of place.

Your home should give you a sense of belonging and provide a context for interpreting your life experiences. It should be a reference place that you look forward to returning to, an anchoring point from which you venture into the world, and a place where you know that your heart resides. To gain a sense of belonging to a place, it is essential to 'ground' yourself. Even if you move often, in each location imagine sinking your roots into earth. If you live in a block of flats or housing estate, find a park or green near your home and take some time to connect to it. Locate yourself on the planet.

2 A feeling of security

When creating a home for your soul, it is vital to make it a place that feels truly safe. It should be a place where you not only feel physically safe, but also where you can truly be yourself. The soul needs a place where you can explore what you are and what you might become, a place where you can be creative and outrageous or quiet and still.

We feel most secure in an environment that truly reflects who we are. Just as an ill-fitting shoe cripples your ability to walk freely and comfortably, a home that does not express your true nature will restrict your ability to reach into the deepest corners of yourself to explore your potential. You can only do that when you feel safe.

A home that matches the contours of your soul subconsciously affirms that you are completely accepted right exactly the way you are. Knowing this encourages you to take the risks necessary to reach your dreams in life. A home that fits you provides a firm launching pad from which you can leap toward your aspirations, as well as a safety net you know you can always depend on when things don't turn out exactly the way you imagined.

3 Harmony with nature

Nature nourishes the soul. Our homes will either separate us from nature or connect us to it. A home for the soul will include tangible links to the world of nature – things you can see, hear, smell, taste and touch that remind you of the sky above and the earth below. Its four walls will form a kind of shrine where the spirit of nature resides as an honoured guest. In the natural home, the lives of the occupants will be in harmony with the cycles and rhythms of nature.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that 'the views of nature held by any people determine all their institutions'. The survival of early humans depended on their ability to live in balance with the natural world, and their homes reflected awareness of this fact. Modern homes are often separated from

nature and the soul has suffered as a result. In the rush to create inexpensive, efficient housing, we have neglected the deeper yearnings of the spirit.

The natural world around us is composed of swirling vortices of energy which make up the four elements of the natural world – air, water, fire and earth. There are simple ways to call the spirits of these elements into your home. When you do, they can ignite the power of nature in your home; they can strengthen and heal you.

One easy way to welcome the spirits of nature into your home is by including natural objects there. Doing this subconsciously recreates feelings that you have when you spend time outdoors. Natural objects recall ancestral memories of early times when we lived close to the land. For example, although most modern bathrooms are miles from a river, lake or the sea, placing smooth river stones in your basin or bath can invoke memories of ancient times when people bathed in local streams and rivers. These objects serve as affirmations of your connection with nature. They honour the Spirit of Water and its powers of purification. When you bring things from nature into your home, they bring with them the feel of the breeze which once blew around them, the sun that warmed them, the rich scent of the earth which supported them.

Ancient homes were constructed from natural local materials. Adobe houses, for instance, were made from the red mud native to the region; wooden houses were made from felled trees from surrounding forests. Building homes from the gifts of the land instilled the energy of that land into the foundations, walls and roof of the home. By bringing objects native to your region into your home, you re-establish this intimate connection with the land. It is remarkable to see how even a few stones from your local river will expand and transform the energy in your home. It will seem to come to life, to breathe and radiate joy when you activate the forces of nature there. A natural home nourishes the soul in a profound and powerful way. (Chapters 7 to 12 will show you many ways to call the energy of nature into your home.)

4 *Sacred space*

I believe that within the core of every human being dwells a yearning for the meaning that lies beyond the prosaic reality of everyday life. We reach out for evidence of something beyond the ordinary. This searching is a reflection of the soul's journey towards its destiny. Because no two souls are alike, no two people will follow exactly the same path in life. A soulful home is one which mirrors and supports the unique essence of the souls who live there. It is a home infused with a feeling of sacred space that allows you to tap into the hallowed places within you and discern the meaning of your life.

The renowned mythologist Joseph Campbell once said, 'To live in a sacred space is to live in a symbolic environment where spiritual life is possible, where everything around you speaks of the exaltation of the spirit. This is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of creative incubation. At first you might find that nothing happens there. But if you have a sacred place and use it, something will eventually happen. Your sacred space is where you find yourself again and again.'¹

Our homes can be so much more than mere boxes in which to live. They can be places where, in the words of Joseph Campbell, 'the whole world is mythologized'.² In such a place the spirit expands; the soul feels set free. The soul connects deeply here, not only with other people, but also with dreams, the environment and the whole universe of reality beyond the home. The weaving of sacred space in your environment creates a web of context that will deepen your sense of relationship to all things.

A HOME FOR YOUR SOUL

In order to create a home for your soul, you must first establish a connection with it and get to know its needs. Just as every person is unique, so every soul has different needs. The following exercises can help you discover what your soul desires. Creating in your imagination a symbolic home for your soul, will help you instill some of that same feeling into your current home.

Envisioning a Home for Your Soul

Close your eyes and allow yourself to relax. Take a few deep full breaths, and with each exhalation allow yourself to enter into a serene state of mind.

- Now imagine that you are going on a journey deep inside yourself to reach your spiritual source point. Say to yourself, 'I am now connecting with my essence.' You might want to give a personal name to this essence, such as a name or an image. By doing this you are connecting to the essence of your soul.
- Visualise your soul travelling to different locations in order to discover what kind of landscape makes it feel most at home: the top of a mountain, by the sea, in a cave, nestled in a valley, near a river, in a rainforest, surrounded by deep snow, overlooking a broad expanse of prairie, or somewhere else. The ideal landscape for your soul is important because it connects you to the energy of the earth.
- Imagine the perfect home for your soul. What kind of walls enclose your soul house? Are they brick, wood, stone, glass; thick, thin, open to nature? What are their colours and textures? What kind of floor?
- Picture the roof of your soul house. Is it high or low, ornate or plain, open to the heavens, domed, flat, sloping, constructed with skylights? Are there beams? Is it rough or smooth?
- Now go through your soul home room by room. Imagine windows, doors, stairs, fabrics and lights; also sounds, smells, colours and textures. Move things around and keep going until your soul house is shining and bright, until it feels like a perfect match for you.

Once you have completed this exercise, take a moment to recall what you experienced and write down. Make your description as detailed as possible. In the coming days you can continue to add to your list. This list will be useful in helping you to design your present home with some of the components of your soul home.

Doing this exercise will probably point out discrepancies between the home you actually live in and the home that your soul would find ideal. There may be aspects of your ideal soul home which it is not possible literally to reproduce in your present home. For example, your ideal soul home may be by the

sea, but you are committed to the life you are living inland right now. This is not an insurmountable problem. Because the soul dwells in the world of the spirit and is a part of your unconscious, it is powerfully affected by symbols. By adding to your environment symbolic representations of what the soul needs, you can nourish it in a powerful, magical way. Find ways to recreate *symbolically* the *feeling* of your soul home within the context of the life and home that you have now.

When my client Sarah did this exercise, she found that her ideal soul home was an English country cottage surrounded by a lovely garden. She visualised the house filled with flowers – from flower boxes to curtains and cushions, to bowls of fresh blooms everywhere. Although Sarah lived in a third-floor flat in a large city, she was able to recreate the feeling of her soul home with pictures of flowers, flower fabrics, and a lovely bouquet of fresh flowers every week.

An artist named John found that the ideal home for his soul was a cave. At the time, he was living in a loft in a modern industrial conversion with high ceilings and lots of windows. Although the environment was ideal for his studio work, John realised that it was not meeting his deeper need for a feeling of seclusion, so we set to work to add cavelike comforts. We hung beautifully textured terracotta-coloured curtains at the tall windows. When he was working during the day they could be pushed aside; but at night he could pull them shut to bring a warm, earthy feeling to the space. We also swagged across the ceiling above his bed several swathes of fabric in warm colours. This gave it a very enclosed cave-like feeling, which made John feel more at peace at night. After living with these changes for a period of time, John noticed that he felt more at ease in all areas of his life.

When you have crystallised your thoughts about the perfect home for your soul, find a word that describes the *feeling* of this special place. One client said that the word for her soul home was ‘celestial’ and that her soul needed to feel a direct and living connection with the galaxies of the night sky. To bring this feeling into her current home, we decided to paint tiny phosphorescent stars on the ceiling of her bedroom and create curtains out of richly embroidered star-patterned fabric. She said that she felt such a deep peace as she fell asleep each night under the ‘stars’.

Your home is like no other place on earth. It is special and unique just the way it is, and through your love, insight and care it can become the ideal place for your soul.



Home as Self

YOUR HOME can be your greatest ally in helping you to achieve your potential. This is true because your home is not only a reflection of you, but in its deepest sense, it also has the power to mould you and shape your future. When you implement changes in your home, you will notice that often your life is also transformed: instantly, dramatically and permanently.

Your home fulfils many functions in your life. On the physical plane, it provides shelter from the elements and offers you protection and privacy. Beyond this, it is also a place where you can relax and be yourself. It can serve as a canvas for your self-expression. Your dwelling is also an outward expression of your inner being, and on a very profound level it is also a place where you can grow spiritually.

In the deepest sense, your personal space is a sharply accurate mirror of your subconscious desires, hopes, fears and dreams. It reveals your beliefs and decisions about yourself and the world. It is a reflection of your identity.

A mirror of yourself

You cannot help but implant your identity on your home. Every object you place in it expresses some inner aspect of yourself. As you mature, your development is mirrored in the choices you make in your environment. The style of your home, your possessions and the colours you like all reflect your inner being. The Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung said that everything in the unconscious seeks an outward manifestation. This principle explains why we continually project our subconscious beliefs and feelings on to our home.

When you want to find out what someone is like, all you need to do is look around his or her home. The spindly teenage boy who plasters his bedroom walls with images of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone is subconsciously saying, 'I want to look like a body builder.' The data processor who decorates her home with photos of unspoilt wilderness, carvings from Africa and an animal-print duvet cover on her bed dreams of having some adventure in her life. A house with natural fabrics, hand-carved wooden toys strewn on the floor and biodegradable laundry soap on the shelf speaks of a belief in living naturally and organically. If you want to discover your subconscious dreams, fears and beliefs, just look around your own home. You will find them represented in every nook and cranny.

Our homes also chronicle our personal history. Our past experiences form a framework that give structure and context to our lives. We use the past to define ourselves. Our history is carried into the present through the symbols with which we surround ourselves. Our past is displayed in the photos on our walls and in the objects we treasure. The teapot from your great aunt, the baby blanket from your

childhood and the silver napkin rings from your mother are all physical relics embedded with memories. They all say something about the way you define yourself, based on your interpretation of the past.

An anchor to the earth

Your home can serve as an anchor to the earth and to your roots. Ken Colbung (Nundjan Djiridjaker), the senior male clan leader of the Australian Bibulmum Aboriginal tribe, spoke to me of how important this connection between people and their land can be. He said, 'Western man is connected materially to the land, but we are connected spiritually to land. It's important that we continue to secure our connection to the land because it is our spiritual embodiment.' Your home is the connecting point between heaven and earth. It is the place of your centre, your axis – it connects you to the land.

A template for spiritual growth

The soul is always yearning to expand and grow. This is the reason why we are subconsciously drawn to home environments that can give us what we need at a particular point in time. The homes we choose often provide what we most need to progress on our journey towards wholeness. Some of the environments may seem to lack harmony or even have unpleasant aspects, *but they always offer us an opportunity to grow.*

Just as we are drawn to individuals and experiences that contribute to our spiritual growth, so too we may seek environments that can help us to learn the lessons that we need in life. The Dalai Lama once remarked that you don't learn tolerance from your friends. What this means is that it is sometimes the people you find the most disagreeable who have the most to teach you. This is true with our homes as well.

Your soul is drawn to what it needs. In traditional feng shui, a home at the top of the mountain is usually considered bad feng shui because it is too exposed. The bottom of a valley is also inauspicious feng shui because it can be too cloistered and constricted. However, living on top of a mountain may suit your soul because the vast open expanses make you feel more expansive...*and this is what your soul needs.* And other people, living down in the valley, may find this environment perfectly meets their requirements for seclusion: its constrictions might help them to focus their otherwise somewhat frenetic energy.

There are no wrong homes. Each home offers you unique opportunities for spiritual growth. The so-called feng shui imperfections of your home may well be exactly what you need for polishing the rough edges of your soul. For example, a man I once knew lived in a rented home that had a very low entrance door. This is usually considered bad feng shui. Henry was a tall man, and every time he entered his house he had to incline his head. Sometimes he would be in a hurry and forget to do this. He would then hit his head on the door lintel which made him angry. Sometimes he yelled at the door. Occasionally he banged his fists on it. One day he came home, looked thoughtfully at the door lintel, and humbly bent his head and walked in. It was a moment of truth, a moment that changed his life.

Henry was often in confrontational situations. Many people found him arrogant, because he was always trying to prove that his point of view was right. The instant he bent his head at his threshold, he

was filled with an indescribable peace. In that moment, he realised that he could navigate around the obstacles in his life. Afterwards, whenever Henry walked through the front doorway, he bent his head in humility saying to himself, 'I accept my life with love and compassion,' and he found more harmony unfolding in his life.

Sometimes problems encountered in feng shui bring to mind the classic question about the chicken and the egg. Which came first? Do we subconsciously choose homes that contain metaphors for the issues that we need to work on? Or do we experience blockages in our life because of the bad feng shui of the home? Although the answer is probably some of each, I generally feel that we subconsciously choose homes because they have something to teach us. *On a soul level, there are no bad homes.* Every home is filled with lessons and opportunities for spiritual growth.

Sometimes the soul is drawn to a house because it has energy that will help activate hidden potential. Shortly after my husband and I were married we moved into a ramshackle little house by the sea. We did not have much money, so I decorated our home with things found in thrift stores and with treasures washed up by the sea. I framed paintings with driftwood, and placed on the windows pieces of glass from the shore that looked lovely in the afternoon sun. Our shabby little house began to glow, igniting an incredible creativity within me unlike anything I had ever experienced before. Without the limitations of our income and this tiny home, I might never have discovered this side of myself.

What is home to you?

To gain clarity about your home, you must first look at what 'home' means to you. The hidden symbols that you discover within your four walls can be decoded to reveal your overall beliefs about what a home is. This will be slightly different for each person.

For many people their home is the place where they sleep every night. Other people may think of home as the place where they were born and grew up, even if they have lived elsewhere for many years. For many native people, home is their ancestral village or the place where their ancestors are buried.

I have spent quite a bit of time in Scandinavia. Many people in these northern countries live in city apartments for most of the year, but for a month or more during the summer they go to a cottage by the lake. Often this will be the place they call home. Their definition of home is not determined by the amount of time they spend there, but the amount of happiness they feel in a place.

Some people's sense of home will be linked to a certain kind of geography, such as the moors of Scotland, the lakes of Sweden, the mountains of Switzerland, or the great plains in the middle of the United States. Whenever these individuals find themselves in this kind of terrain, they feel at home. It is useful to ask yourself, 'Where do I feel at home?' When you have discovered just what the word home means to you, then you can begin to create the kind of environment that has this sort of energy in it.

I once had a feng shui client, named John, who was a perfect example of how this process can work. When he considered what the idea of home meant to him, John realised that he felt most at home whenever he was in the mountains. I suggested that he place paintings and photos of mountains within his home and office to help create the feeling of mountains in his space. He reported that after doing this he felt much more at home with himself and his life.

For some people, ideas of home can be tied to the traditions, heritage or religion of a particular

culture. (See Chapter 4.) They feel at home when they are surrounded by things that symbolise the associations for them. For example, one of my clients found that he felt at home in an environment filled with things from the Japanese culture. He wasn't Asian and hadn't grown up in an Asian culture but none the less he found that including Japanese objects in his home filled him with a great sense of peace and contentment. Another client found that she felt truly at home among relics and icons reflecting Spanish Catholicism. She said that she felt so serene after placing antique carved statues of Jesus and various saints around her home.

These yearnings to be surrounded by objects from a particular culture may be the product of early childhood experiences, ancestral memories, the collective unconscious, symbolic associations, or even former-life memories. Discovering the reason for the attraction is not always important. What does matter, however, is honouring the preferences of the soul. Something that may seem trivial, illogical or even somewhat silly to the conscious mind often fills a deep need on an unconscious level. Listen to the promptings of your soul. It will lead you home.

HOW THE OBJECTS IN YOUR HOME INFLUENCE YOU

The material items that surround you create a bridge between the realms of form and spirit. Because of this, objects in your environment have a profound effect on you in three different ways. First, the symbolism of the things in your home shapes and reinforces your identity, in either a positive or negative way. Second, because these objects reveal aspects of your inner world, they can help you move towards integration and unity. And third, the things in your home can be a vehicle for realising your potential.

1 Shaping your identity

Your home is filled with metaphors for your life. Your belongings not only reflect your values, they also are constantly shaping who you are. This is true even if you are unaware of their significance to you.

To illustrate how this works, let me tell you about a feng shui consultation I did for a single woman who wanted to be in a long-term relationship. As I walked through her home, I saw numerous paintings and sculptures of single women. In addition she had in her bedroom a beautiful doll collection that comprised single female dolls. The glass cabinet containing the dolls faced her bed. This was the last thing she saw before she went to sleep and the first thing she saw when she awoke in the morning. *All her prized possessions were a reflection of her identity as a single woman.* Although consciously she wanted to be in a love relationship, subconsciously she saw herself as single and had unconsciously imprinted this identity throughout her environment. Her home was a constant reflection and *affirmation* of her identity as a single woman.

The things surrounding you in your home serve as subliminal reminders of who you are. They will continue to direct you towards old patterns of behaviour. Subconscious beliefs are generally so deeply seated that one is not aware of them. They affect our perception of reality in the same way that tinted glasses allow only certain colours to reach our eyes. In the example above, the woman who wanted a relationship was completely unaware of the clues her home provided about her resistance to the

possibility in life.

Your environment doesn't lie. Go around looking at the objects in your home as if you had entered for the first time. What do they say about you? Some symbolism may be obvious, but if you look with an open heart, you might uncover some surprising information about your inner beliefs which can be very helpful to you.

The exciting news is that you can use the items in your environment to release limiting beliefs about yourself and the world. Once you have identified negative inner beliefs, you can set about finding the ways you have represented them in your home. Then you will be free to make changes and your home can become a powerful affirmation of who you want to be. This method is a thousand times stronger than affirmations spoken or written, because it immerses you in a sea of metaphors that constantly support you in becoming the person you want to be.

Spending ten minutes a day writing an affirmation such as, 'I am prosperous and successful' has been shown to have a positive effect in reprogramming the subconscious mind. However, if you create an environment around you that constantly exudes the feeling of abundance, this idea will be embedded in your subconscious mind day and night.

Ruth had been trying to become more prosperous and never seemed to be able to get ahead. As I walked through her home I observed that although it was a very nice home it was also a very plain one, with few furnishings. Most of the walls were painted in monotone shades of grey and cream. The energy felt austere, almost impoverished. Even though Ruth religiously carried out her daily ritual of writing abundance affirmations, she was living in a home that felt drab and severe. It was a subliminal message affirming her diminished resources. Through our work together, Ruth discovered what abundance meant to her, and we found ways that to implement this *feeling* into her home.

Prosperity will not have the same associations for everyone, but for Ruth two things that symbolised this were big velvet cushions and the colour crimson red. To create the feeling of opulence in her home she painted her study a beautiful shade of crimson and made some sumptuous velvet covers for the divan pillows. She said those two small changes completely transformed the way that she felt in her home. She reported that she *felt* more prosperous. Then, no sooner did she feel more prosperous, her income was boosted: within two weeks she was given a rise at work.

2 Becoming more integrated

The objects we surround ourselves with are not random. Your soul is constantly, subconsciously arranging and rearranging the world around you in remarkable patterns all aimed at integration and wholeness.

It is the nature of human beings to invest objects with deeper meaning. The Panama hat on the porch isn't just a weaving of straw and ribbon. It is the shoreline that you walked along wearing it. It is your lover's arm linked in yours, and your laughter as you raced across the sand to recapture it when it flew off your head. You might not consciously remember all of these associations when you pass by the hat, but they linger. And they are affecting the way you feel about your life. Each thing in your home will either increase your energy or diminish it.

The great web of meaning that surrounds you in your home occurs because of a largely unconscious process of integration. Your mind is constantly rearranging pieces of reality in ways that have meaning for you. For example, when you place a piece of your grandmother's antique lace next to a silver comb that belonged to your mother, and then put these next to a photo of yourself on your

dressing table, you might be trying, on an unconscious level, to understand and integrate the female relationships in your family history. Choosing a painting of a campfire for your living room, and hanging it next to a photo of a still mountain lake might indicate that you are trying to integrate your fiery impulsive nature with your desire for a quiet, reflective life.

When you understand the deeper meanings within your home and how they represent various aspects of yourself, you can begin to see how all the separate parts of yourself are linked together. You can consciously alter the symbols in your home to create wholeness and balance in your life.

3 Expressing your individuality

Even if you think you have no talent for decorating, your home is still a vehicle for expressing yourself. It is one of the ways of distinguishing yourself from others, of demonstrating who you are. When I was a child I had a tree house which I embellished with moss and twigs and pieces of cardboard and old bottles. I felt so alive, so creative and so uniquely myself when I was in this special place.

When teenagers throw their room into disarray, this might indicate that they are defining themselves as individuals separate from their family. The process of doing this can sometimes be difficult, and this turmoil will be reflected in the chaos of the teenager's environment. It is also very common for them to pick wild posters and very intense colours as they try out different identities. They often go through periods of choosing styles that are opposed to the dominant style of the home; it is a way of declaring their individuality.

Sometimes an environment can be used to diminish individuality, as is the case in the armed forces or in certain religious orders. I lived for several years in a Zen monastery, where our personal space was supposed to be simple and undecorated. This type of environment directed our attention away from our personal needs and towards a more universal awareness of self.

Your home can be a shining revelation of your truest self. Don't worry that you haven't got a classic sense of style. If you choose things that you love, objects that fully express the aspirations of your soul, you will create an environment that is perfect for you. The time, energy and care that you invest in your home will more than repay you. You will have space that radiates harmony, beauty and peace, and these qualities will fill the rest of your life.

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