



"Ask the Expert" Article – Sunday Tribune Property Section

***Some consider feng shui very New Age, but how long has feng shui actually been practiced in the East?**

A: -Classical Feng Shui has been practised in the East for over 4000 years and is based on a keen observation of the energy (Chi/Qi) of the interior and exterior of your space over time. In fact, excavations in the Henan Province in Central China attest to a primitive form of Feng Shui being practised 6,000 years ago.

Feng Shui looks at the forces of Heavens energy (time) and earths' energy (space) and creates a balance between these forces. With balance comes the opportunity for improvement of your health, wealth and relationships.

In fact much of this ancient information is borne out by modern scientists.

Einstein understood that time and space were not separate entities but are connected to form a fourth dimension called space-time.

Therefore it can be said that classical Feng Shui is based in part on modern scientific reasoning – as quantum physics has revealed both people and objects are actually bundles of intertwining energy, which is connected. Albert Einstein's' theory of relativity tells us that the paper you are reading and the chair you are sitting in are all forms of energy at rest. Feng Shui provides a formula for harnessing this energy and the energy in the spaces in between, that we cannot see, to enhance our environment so that the space is in harmony with your own energy.

The ancient Chinese perceived a rhythm connecting humanity to nature. They saw that the laws of nature were also the laws of life. Feng Shui looks at ways to interpret and co-operate with the powerful forces of nature in order to address life patterns and change them easily, - going with the flow rather than swimming against the tide.

*** Who is most likely to use the service of a feng shui consultant in their home?**

A: - Feng Shui is employed by a wide variety of individuals across the spectrum of busy professionals looking to their home environment to provide balance in their hectic lives, to concerned families trying to create as healthy and nourishing a space as possible to raise their children. It is also employed by businesses, small and large to create a balanced, happy and productive environment for their staff to occupy. Worldwide some more notable commercial interiors employing Feng Shui include Trump Towers in New York City, Sydney Harbour Casino and Hotel and Hong Kong Disneyland, which is currently under construction. In Ireland, companies as diverse as banks, businesses in the IFSC, hotels, retail outlets and busy offices, as well as private dwellings have employed the services of Feng Shui



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practitioners. So as you can see, anyone interested in improving their living and working conditions will benefit from the advise of a Feng Shui practitioner.

***Yin and Yang are mysterious concepts to most people. Can you say, in an easy to understand way, why arranging your home around feng shui principles does make a difference?**

A: - Actually, far from being mysterious concepts yin and yang are quite simple to understand. Yin and Yang are two opposing yet complimentary energies that shape the universe and everything in it. Good or auspicious Feng Shui can only be created when there is harmony or balance between Yin and Yang. For example an environment that is too Yin (heavy, dark, blocked, fixed, cluttered) will result in its occupants complaining of fatigue, depression and lack of motivation. An environment, which is too Yang (light, bright, empty, active, open) offers no respite or relaxation for its occupants leading to bad temper and headaches etc. Places that are too Yin and lifeless are equally as difficult to thrive in as places that are too Yang- busy and noisy.

Feng Shui strives to create a balance so that the energy of the space reflects the occupants’ needs for shelter and support on every level – mind, body and spirit. Your environment should reflect your aesthetics and values, support your energy, rather than be a source of stress and at the very least remind you of your dreams.

***Is it basically a set of common sense guidelines for a healthy home?**

A: - Not exactly, Feng Shui is about more than healthy homes. However, a good dollop of common sense is where any Feng Shui consultation will begin. Unfortunately common sense, in terms of healthy living and working environments, is not common practise! Therefore, in the first stages of application of Feng Shui to your home or business it is essential to isolate the elements in the environment that contribute to stress by affecting our health and well being. Things like chemical pollution from the material finishes, cleaning agents etc that we introduce into our homes daily, have a huge impact on our health and commonly result in allergies and general dis-ease. We also need to consider electro-magnetic fields, which distort our own electro-magnetic or energy fields when we come in contact with them on an on-going basis. For example: sleeping in an electrically active space, using electric clock radios, electric blankets, sleeping above or adjacent to the fuse board in the house etc. stimulates your nervous system, therefore inhibiting restful sleep. Similarly it is very useful to check the plot of land we live on for geopathic stress, which is disturbed energy within the earth itself, which can have a major impact on our well-being. We need to look at ways to strip back the layers of these stressors first, before applying Feng Shui principles, in order to deal with the energy of our spaces (and how that impacts on us), in a comprehensive manner.



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*** ... and is it also helpful to de-clutter our spaces?**

A: - Absolutely! Clutter accumulates where energy stagnates. It is extreme Yin or tired, stale energy. When you live surrounded by clutter, your life will be stuck or stagnant in the same way. It is like a form of self-sabotage, keeping you stuck surrounded by your past rather than allowing you to be open to new possibilities and opportunities. Every time you encounter clutter in your environment you lower your energy level. On a purely practical level it gets in the way of your forward momentum. The book ‘Clear your Desk’ by Declan Treacy tells us that office workers spend on average 22 minutes a day looking for lost documents – what a waste of your time! If you imagine that you are connected to everything you own by invisible strands of energy, then it makes it much easier to lighten the load when it comes to having a clear out in your home or office. Take a look at everything in your space and ask yourself “Is this useful, or do I find it beautiful to look at?” if the answer is no, then it can be reclassified as clutter and removed from your space. The sense of freedom, lightness and mental clarity that comes from clearing your space of clutter is an excellent first step on the road to employing good Feng Shui in both living and working spaces.

*** What are the most common pollutants in the average home?**

A: - You can get overwhelmed by looking at pollutants in the home but it is important to do this a little at a time and piece by pieces remove as many toxins as possible from your environment. In looking at pollutants in the home look at the following 4 elements: -

1. Water Quality
2. Energy – e.m.f’s – electromagnetic fields from electrical appliances and lighting etc.
3. Air – Voc’s – substances that readily release vapours at room temperature are known as volatile organic compounds.
4. Materials – for building such as pvc, soc’s – synthetic organic compounds in water based paints etc.

The main factors affecting indoor air quality are hermetically sealed buildings, synthetic furnishings and reduced ventilation. Combined, these have created a much more hazardous environment in terms of pollution indoors, than outdoors. This is because nowadays, in this part of the world we spend 95% of our time indoors.

Some of the more commonly found pollutants are Formaldehyde, Xylene, toluene and Benzene.

For example formaldehyde is a binder and is out-gassed from chipboard furnishings such as kitchen cabinet frames and much of our modern furniture, glue backing on carpets, rubber underlay, draperies, fabrics, facial tissues, paper



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towels, mdf., chemically treated wooden floors Etc. New Car Smell is actually formaldehyde and takes 8- 10 yrs to fully out-gas! Therefore, new homes in particular and those undergoing a great degree of refurbishment are sources of concentrated formaldehyde.

Dry cleaning clothes and draperies etc. – Xylene, benzene and Toluene.

Floor coverings – formaldehyde, xylene/toluene, benzene.

Paints, stains and varnishes – formaldehyde, xylene, toluene, benzene and alcohols. Odour free paints have an extra chemical added to mask the odour of the other chemicals and are therefore not necessarily healthier!

Scotchguard, flame-retardant etc –and most of our cleaning products are also sources of indoor air pollution.

So what can you do to counter this? It simple, common sense that we can put into common practise –

*If you must dry clean your clothes, at the very least, take the plastic wrapper off them and hang them outdoors on a clothes line or by an open window to let the chemicals outgas – don't bring them straight to your bedroom where you will be breathing in these chemicals as you sleep!

*Make healthier choices, choose natural materials where you have a choice, read labels on cleaning materials, choose more natural options, throw open your doors and windows daily – especially when re-decorating and finally add lots of healthy green plants. Plants can be a mitigating factor in combating indoor pollution as they have an amazing ability to reduce Voc's and Emf's in our environment as well as adding life force and vibrant energy to our spaces. For example the Boston fern, the aloe vera and the rubber plant all have the ability to reduce formaldehyde, the spider plant can reduce carbon monoxide, the areca palm can reduce xylene and toluene and English ivy can absorb benzene from the air.

For more information on plants: - "How to grow Fresh Air" by B. C. Wolverton.

Symptoms caused by effects of pollutants – irritability, fatigue, anxiety, rashes, headaches, eye irritation, chronic cough, chronic sinus infections, joint/muscle pain, memory loss or inability to concentrate.

*** Does creating a home around feng shui principles entail a massive change from the more traditional "Irish" way of home making?**

A: - No, employing Feng Shui in your home need not result in a space that looks like a Chinese Restaurant! Feng Shui involves looking at the harmony found in nature and reflecting that in the layout, orientation and decoration of our homes. In employing Feng Shui therefore, we look at Yin and Yang, and the five elements found in nature and use colour and shape, imagery etc to balance the flow of the elements and encourage good energy-flow throughout the space.



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Every traditional culture, not least our own Celtic/Irish culture embraced this information in some form or other, therefore, much of the information does not feel alien at all. In fact when you employ Feng Shui properly to your space it makes it feel much more like “home” – a place of shelter and comfort, than ever before. Aligning your space to benefit from the healing energy of the earth and the heavens, positioning your bed, desk, kitchen etc to benefit from this healing energy and at the same time reducing stressors is the most natural thing in the world, when you think about it.

*** What does a home consultation with a feng shui expert involve? And cost from?**

A: - A Feng Shui Consultation involves looking at every aspect of your life - what is working, what needs a boost etc. For this reason we take many things into account, the persons astrology - heavens energy, the physical environment - mans energy, and the energy of the environment, which the client occupies - earth’s energy.

Most Feng Shui Consultations involve first having some *Feng Shui Astrology* done - this can be the Japanese version - *9 star K-* looking at how a persons energy changes each year over a cycle of 9 years, the Chinese Version - *Ming Kua* and *Four pillars Astrology*- which gives us a persons best directions to face and provides extra information about the individual to figure out what their energy is and how it may best be supported.

The consultation itself takes between 2 - 3 hours, in general, and involves an explanation of the clients Feng Shui Astrology and discussion with the client about what they wish to derive from the consultation. Once this has been established I will explain how the **Bagua, Ba Zhai** and **Feng Shui principles** may be applied to the space in a practical and aesthetically pleasing way to conform to your lifestyle.

Next, we walk through the space making initial observations and recommendations and dowsing for **geopathic stress** etc. Where geopathic stress is identified as a problem this is balanced using earth acupuncture - simply a way of harmonizing earth’s energy beneath the built environment.

In other cases it may be necessary to do some *Space Clearing* work. Space Clearing is involved with cleansing the “atmosphere” within a space.

A consultation may involve all of the above or any combination of these, each consultation is different as it is tailored to the individual client and space involved. Generally, a written report is provided afterward to reiterate the recommendations provided in the consultation. Charges for consultations vary from consultant to



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consultant, it is important to ask what each consultation entails as it may differ with each individual. My charge for a domestic consultation includes Feng Shui Astrology and a written report afterward.

***Does the current trend for working from home, i.e., having a lot of technology such as computer, ISDN line, etc., in the house upset that energy balance**

A: - Having a home office will obviously involve introducing a lot more Emf's to your environment, these need to be dealt with as a matter of priority. Also, office furnishings tend to be synthetic in nature and therefore can increase voc's polluting air quality. Tend to these stressors first, adding plenty of healthy green plants etc. Then, try to reduce clutter by having proper storage, filing systems etc. and adopt a clear desk policy. This means clearing your desk completely when you finish work for the day so that there is no chance of it spilling over into your living space. Attend to the Feng Shui of the space by paying special attention to the layout, orientation and positioning of the office in your home. In an ideal world the desk should be placed so that the occupant has their back to a solid wall and has a view of the door and window - and so is in control of their environment, they should also face one of their best directions while working.

Identify the fortunate blessings area of the office space and ensure that this area is uncluttered and does not house the waste paper bin!

Try to place desks so that they avoid sharp corners or pillars, furniture, shelving etc. Round edged designs are more favorable as they tend to support creativity. Square or rectangular desks, however, are better for management and finances.

Finally, ensure a real separation of the office from the living space. If this is a multi-functional space, ensure that the computer and paperwork can be concealed from view when not in use so that you are not constantly reminded of pressures from work while you go about the business of your living your life!

***Why does the direction your head is pointing when you lie in bed make a difference to your overall health?**

A: - When we are at rest our bodies are recuperating from the stress of the day and regenerating cells etc. As we sleep our crown chakra – an energy centre at the top of your head is absorbing energy from the direction it is pointed toward. As discussed, in Feng Shui Astrology, by using our date, time and place of birth we deduce our 4 auspicious directions and 4 inauspicious directions to face. Your auspicious directions are for fortunate blessings, good health, relationships harmony and clear thinking. Therefore, it makes sense, that if you have a choice in the orientation of your bed, you would choose one of your better directions. Where there is no choice in the positioning of the bed due to built-in furnishings etc. and your bed currently faces one



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of your inauspicious directions, this can be balanced by introducing one of the five elements in the form of colour or ornamentation for example.

*** Briefly, what are the most common mistakes people make in designing their homes?**

A: -

*Forgetting that their homes are an extension of their own energy, which impact hugely on them as they go about their lives – Winston Churchill said “We shape our buildings and thereafter they shape us” – very true.

*Failing to note the energetics of the orientation of the building, and its layout, the effects of neighbouring buildings and natural formations etc.

*Making unwise choices in material finishes which will now be a source of indoor pollution.

*Not considering Emf’s from electrical equipment, pylons etc and how these impact on their health.

*Not analysing their lifestyles properly so that they are clear on what they require from their homes. For example do they require a predominantly Yin calming shelter from the hustle and bustle of their busy lives or a predominantly Yang energising, to invigorate a more sedentary life, or a balance of the two. Then analysing how to achieve this with Feng Shui, using colour and shape and ornamentation, layout etc.

*Simply not taking the time to connect to how they feel in their environment, getting out of their heads and into their bodies and in so doing identifying what’s working and what isn’t.

***If you could choose five things that we could do within the home, which would make a real difference to our well being, what would they be?**

A: - First, we need to acknowledge the connectedness of all things, we are not separate from our environments – they are our outer skin. Look at the Big Picture – when we understand and accept that we are a part of nature’s forces and go with that flow rather than swimming against the tide, life on every level, will improve.

1. Reduce stressors by choosing healthier options in material finishes and furniture. Make our bedrooms as electrically quiet as possible. Add healthy green plants where appropriate.
2. Reduce clutter in your space, have proper storage for things that you need and love and clear out everything else. Do this regularly to maintain constant energy flow in your space.
3. Have some ‘space clearing’ done on your home and businesses regularly. It is understood that each space resonates with the energy of the people that have occupied it previously. Similar to the way in which an argument can seem to “hang in the air” for some time



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afterward, over time every experience that occurs within the space builds up like so many “psychic cobwebs” within the atmosphere. This can make it feel dull and heavy and lifeless.

4. Space Clearing cleanses this energy and places positive intention into a space; lifting the atmosphere in the same way that spring-cleaning does on a physical level. It is important to do this when we move into a new home or workplace and also to “clear the air” every now and then and refresh the energy within a space so that it supports the energy of the occupants rather than keeping them stuck in the past.
5. Familiarise yourself with the principles of Feng Shui and how it can help create vital, life enhancing, living and working spaces.

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