

FENG SHUI

Get a Good Night's Sleep with Feng Shui

by Melissa Cook



We all know what it's like to wake up after a good night's sleep feeling refreshed and ready to greet a new day. Yet according to a recent survey conducted by the National Sleep Foundation, 49% of Americans report difficulty sleeping at some point in their lives.

When sleep deprivation seriously affects the quality of life, many Americans may turn to taking sleep remedies. Without dismissing the necessity of taking medication – especially if the quality of your life is severely compromised over an extended period – I'd like to recommend adding some time-honored remedies to your treatment. It may surprise you to learn that the principles of feng shui can actually enhance and reinforce the quality of your sleep. Since we spend approximately a third of our day in bed, the bedroom, according to feng shui, is considered one of the most important areas of the home.

Briefly, feng shui is the ancient practice of arranging our physical environments to enhance the quality of our lives. The underlying principle of feng shui is to balance the energy (chi) that flows in and around us. Architectural design and décor,

including furniture arrangement, colors, shapes, symbols, even personal intentions, all affect how we live, and yes, how well we sleep in our homes.

As a feng shui practitioner, I've noticed two housing trends that have the potential to exacerbate sleep problems.

(1) Bedrooms are in less desirable locations. On a recent tour of new homes in the Hamptons, I noted that many bedrooms were located in the front of the home, and that the windows were low to the floor and oversized. The location and oversized windows offered little protection from the noise of the street. Bedrooms used regularly should be located in the back of the home, away from street activity.

(2) Bigger bedrooms are not necessarily better. Cathedral ceilings, extra-large bedrooms, and an abundance of large windows can dwarf us. We need to bring large bedrooms down to human scale to create a cozy place to nest for the night. When sleeping in a larger-than-life bedroom, consider purchasing a canopy bed, sectioning off a smaller sleeping area with plants or a screen, and hanging sheer curtains that filter light during the day and blinds or drapes that close off the light at nighttime.

Feng shui tips can make a dramatic difference between tossing and turning all night long and sleeping as soundly as a newborn babe.

Here are a few other feng shui guidelines that can assist you in your efforts to get a good night's sleep. If you already sleep soundly, by all means sleep on!

The placement of your bed makes a difference. When beds are located under heavy beams or built into a wall of bookcases, the sleeper is bombarded by a push of downward-flowing energy that not only affects one's ability to sleep soundly but may even affect one's physical health. People sleeping under these conditions may develop ailments such as headaches, body aches, and pains. I suggest removing the bookcases from behind the bed or moving the bed. If you're lying under a beam, paint the beam the color of the ceiling or stencil it with an "uplifting" design such as clouds or birds in flight. Or again, move the bed.

Give your bed a view to the door. Sleeping in a bed without a view of the door can lead to startling circumstances! If this is your situation, place a small mirror or reflective surface to get a view of the door or have a sense of movement in that area. However, avoid placing the bed so that it faces the door. If you don't have a choice, place a heavy chest at the foot of the bed to block an on-rush of energy from the doorway while you sleep or simply close the door at night.

Soften sharp angles. Squared-off side tables point laserlike beams of energy directly at sleepers, which can interrupt a good night's sleep. In feng shui, we call these sharp corners "poison arrows." To soften edges, drape your side tables with an

attractive cloth. If you're in the process of purchasing new bedroom furniture, consider side tables with rounded corners.

Color is key. The general rule in feng shui is to decorate bedrooms in any of a wide range of warm skin tones. Creamy beige, peach, soft pink and warm brown create a soothing atmosphere that appeals to the senses, as do soft cushiony bed linens. However, if you're suffering from severe sleep deprivation, cool colors, such as blue and green, may be what you need to cool down your senses.

Mirrors are energy activators. While mirrors enhance the vitality of active spaces such as living rooms, bedrooms are meant to be quiet. I don't advocate facing a mirror while in bed, especially if you're prone to waking up in the middle of the night. Waking up to your own reflection can be unnerving. A dresser mirror is best placed to the side of the bed. If this can't be done, drape a shawl over a mirror at night to "put the room to sleep."

Consider a wood bedframe. Our bodies are vulnerable while we sleep, so we need beds that offer comfort and stability. I recommend a bed with a headboard that is anchored by a wall, which offers support and protection. For those who dislike headboards, line up a few large, firm cushions behind the bed. Wood is a sturdy, "warm" material for a bed because it allows our bodies to slow down at night. Metal, on the other hand, is "cool and quick" and enhances mental alertness. Metal also conducts electromagnetic frequencies, which may cause tossing and turning or waking up feeling drained.

Be aware of what's under the bed. What you place under your bed can also affect your sleep. In feng shui, we avoid "storing" possessions on the floor because they pull vitalizing energy downward, leading to energy stagnation. Instead of sleeping with a clear flow of supportive energy under the bed, you end up sleeping over dust bunnies and old memories. Captain's beds with drawers are acceptable, especially in small apartments, but be sure to store bed- or bath-related items in the drawers, such as linens and towels, as opposed to work-related material, which stirs up "competing" energies.

What we see upon waking sets the tone of our day. If the first thing you see in the morning is a desk, computer, or exercise equipment, you're most likely to jump out of bed and throw yourself into action. How much better do you think you'd feel if you opened your eyes to an inspiring piece of artwork? When small apartments necessitate having a desk in a bedroom, create distance between your work and sleep areas with a screen or tall plants.

Want a better night's sleep? These simple and practical feng shui tips can make a dramatic difference between tossing and turning all night long and sleeping as soundly as a newborn babe.

Illustration by Aurora Andrews

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