

# Spring Cleaning with Feng Shui

By Melissa Cook

*Spring is a time of renewal and revitalization, when homeowners traditionally clean their nests, clear away winter's protective embrace, and ready themselves for the expansive warmth of summer. "*

"Spring cleaning" has come to symbolize more than cleaning a few rooms. As soon as we spot our first robin or experience our first day in short-sleeves, winter becomes a memory, and we're planning for summer. Suddenly, home seems dark and confining: We seek both the light and the lightness of being.

As a feng shui consultant, I often ponder the relevance of this ancient system to our modern lives. My simple definition of feng shui is "arranging our environments to enhance our lives." After a cold, dark winter, spring is the perfect time to think about enhancing and reenergizing our lives. The principles of feng shui offer a practical and symbolic context for starting fresh.

Energy is at the core of feng shui. The early Chinese called it "chi," vital energy that is essential to all things. They observed how the two forces of life--wind (feng) and water (shui)--affected the quality of chi. They came to understand that when people live within a harmonious, balanced embrace of these two opposing forces, they have the best opportunities for leading lives of comfort and safety, and thus of prosperity and happiness.

During winter hibernation, we tend to gather things around us to keep us warm and cozy--closets full of bulky clothing, books and magazines that are perfect for a cold night's reading. Unless we set aside some time daily for tidying up, our homes can become cluttered before we realize it. Clutter stagnates the flow of healthy chi and therefore blocks opportunities from entering into our lives. When we live with clutter, we may find that our homes and bodies actually FEEL different, perhaps a heaviness or lethargy subtly settles in and we slow down. Every surface seems to have sprouted bits of paper. We lose track of items that we need or love. We become less efficient, then frustrated, then powerless and overwhelmed as our homes seem to gain the upper hand. On a spiritual level, we may become less open to hearing our truth. Whenever we feel frustrated, powerless or overwhelmed by our homes, we've got a feng shui problem.

How can we cope? Several feng shui guidelines can come to the rescue:

- Put yourself in the mood to clean.
- Surround yourself with the things you love.
- Place comfort and safety first.
- Organize and simplify.
- Bless your home.

**Put yourself in the mood to clean.** Before you start to clean, put on your favorite music, light some incense or spritz a favorite flower essence to invigorate or relax you (depending on your personal style).

Then take small steps so you won't become overwhelmed. You may want to create a daily or weekly schedule and tackle a drawer or one area of your closet at a time. Acknowledge and reward yourself for completing your task (treat yourself to a cappuccino or a bouquet of flowers). You may, in fact, find the cleaning process so interesting that you don't want to stop! But don't work so hard that you become exhausted and deplete your chi. Take breaks or finish on another day.

If it seems truly overwhelming, either hire a professional organizer or give the process a new name and make a game of it. Have a book-swap party. Try clothes on for a friend and ask her advice. Above all, avoid shuffling things from place to place. A stuffed basement, garage, or storage space stagnates your chi as much as a stuffed closet does. There's a saying in feng shui, "There's nowhere to hide and it ALL counts!"

**Surround yourself with the things you love.** When we live with what we love, we surround ourselves with possessions that attract positive, life-affirming chi. Give yourself permission to let go of things that don't lift your spirits: They won't lift your chi. When clearing and cleaning your home, give everything its place and keep one item that you truly love in each room to welcome you and keep the chi flowing in a positive direction.

**Place comfort and safety first.** When we live in comfort and safety, our nervous systems can relax. Sharp edges, blocked pathways, unupholstered chairs, rickety furniture or fixtures, and stacks of things can act like land mines in our own homes and can slowly wear us down without our realizing it as we unconsciously maneuver around them.

**Organize and simplify.** When we organize and simplify our possessions, we create space, both physically and energetically, for even better things to enter into our lives. We actually feel lighter. Choose clothing and possessions that represent who you are now or who you want to be. According to the Law of Attraction, you will begin attracting what you want. If you can't decide what to keep or let go of, ask yourself these questions:

Do I love it? Do I really need it? Does it represent who I am now? Am I willing to fix it?  
Is there someone else who would like it?



Ideally, we can all benefit from a daily 10-minute clearing up. As soon as you come home from work, place your keys, wallet, and purse in a designated area. Hang up your clothes. Open your mail, throw out ads or circulars, and put important mail in a specific place for future action. Before going to bed, take the day's newspapers and trash to the garbage or recycling bin. This simple routine will become second nature and can stave off the beginnings of clutter creep.

**Bless your home.** Once you've cleaned and cleared, take some time to bless your home. One simple method is to evoke the healing qualities of earth, air, fire and water. As you walk through each room, open a window, place a bowl of water in the center of the room, light incense and a candle, and sprinkle salt, especially in corners where energy stagnates. Either silently or aloud say a prayer or an intention for abundance to fill each space.

Since our environments act like mirrors to our inner selves, spring cleaning our homes will be much more powerful if we do some internal clearing - "as within, so without." In feng shui, we refer to the importance of maintaining our "inner chi." There are many ways to raise your chi: meditation, yoga, exercise, chanting, music, prayer, visiting friends. Just as 10-minutes-a-day can take the edge off clutter, we can benefit from a short period each day devoted to quietly giving thanks, forgiving, reading spiritual books, and setting our intentions for the day. Before bed, it is helpful to take a moment to get in touch honestly with your feelings about the day's experiences and then release them. You could write them on paper and tear it up, or type them on a computer and delete the file, or give them up to God or Source.

As we increasingly open ourselves to living in energetic consciousness, we can more fully appreciate our connection to everything and everyone around us, including our homes. This spring, take a few moments to look around your home and listen to what it has to say: "Too cluttered, too dark, too small, out of date," perhaps even "just right!" Once you begin living in relationship with your home, life will never be the same. Spring cleaning becomes an opportunity to tap into a deeper part of yourself, as well as a time to let go of the old and welcome the new. Happy Spring!

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