

Find Your Luck in the New Year with Feng Shui

By Courtney Llewellyn, Correspondent

After speaking with Susan LaForte, a certified practitioner and owner of Feng Shui for Home and Business, based in Northampton, I realized why 2009 wasn't the best year for me, financially. It wasn't just the economy or the unforeseen expense of buying a new car – it was because my prosperity and abundance gua was being neglected.

There are eight areas, or "guas," encircling the center of a home. These nine different zones correspond to nine major areas of life – prosperity, fame and reputation, relationships, family, health, creativity and children, skills and knowledge, career and helpful people. My prosperity gua is currently home to a folding table and a chair.

If I follow the principles of feng shui and make this space in my home more inviting, I should attract more positive, prosperous energy to my home and myself.

If you'd like to learn more about how to make 2010 a luckier year for yourself, check out some of the tips LaForte shared with me.

What Is Feng Shui?

LaForte, who began her study of feng shui the weekend following the disaster of Sept. 11, 2001, believes that when your home and work spaces reflect your innermost desires for growth, "miracles" can occur.

Literally translated, feng shui means "wind" and "water." Its roots, based in China, are thousands of years old. Feng shui is a system of laws considered to govern spatial arrangement and orientation in relation to the flow of energy (qi), and whose favorable or unfavorable effects are taken into account when siting and designing buildings. Every traditional culture has its own unique version of it.

According to LaForte, much of the practice is common sense: fix it, clean it, replace it. Make each room and your house as a whole as welcoming and comfortable as possible.

"Since we are part of our environment, we can influence and change it with the right intention – one that is beneficial not only to ourselves, but also to the highest good of all concerned," LaForte said.

How it Works

When LaForte meets with a client, she starts by asking questions. "There's usually an issue the person wants addressed, like a health concern or relationship trouble," she explained. "We need something to focus on. I give suggestions on what they've told me. They don't have to accept anything I say if they don't want to because I am in their space."

LaForte said an initial visit lasts between two and three hours and that she likes to make return visits because there's "always more to work on."

She added there aren't really any "shoulds" in feng shui – if you have an idea about what color a room should be or where something should be placed, go with it. That's your intuition speaking to you.

How To Make it Work for You

The best way to attract positive energy to you and your home is to focus first on your front door. Your front door is called your "mouth of chi" and it is one of the most important aspects of your home to consider. This is how the world and opportunities approach you. "A lot of New Englanders don't use their front doors. They're neglected. They're available but they're not using them," LaForte noted. She suggested making sure your front door is welcoming and easy to get to and that the approach to the front door is clear.

"What you want to get is when you come home, you look at your place and feel uplifted," she said. "Feng shui is fun and often it's simple. It's about shifting how people feel about their space."

After figuring out what a client is looking for, LaForte lays an invisible bagua (a "map of feng shui") over your home to determine what areas need to be evaluated and adjusted to maximize the areas of your life you want to improve.

To bring luck and prosperity to yourself, make your front door welcoming and place furniture in "command positions" – the spots farthest from the door in a room but with a clear view of the door. LaForte said you can also apply this practice to your office. Have your desk facing the door but have it as far from the door as possible.

More Lucky Tips

Don't have a desk you can move? Stuck in a cubicle like I am, facing a computer screen instead of a door? No problem. If you can't

physically move something, you can employ something known as a cure.

"A cure can be something like a little mirror on your computer monitor that allows you to see the door behind you," LaForte said.

She also suggested placing a mirror over the stove in your kitchen, since we spend a lot of time there preparing food for ourselves. She added that the stove is usually in a command position in a kitchen.

Other feng shui "hot spots" to look at include the corners of rooms, where stale energy collects. LaForte recommends that you clean and clap out the old dusty stagnant energy occasionally. Attics are also important because they represent your higher aspirations and possibilities. To have a cluttered attic means that you are limiting yourself in some way.

"It's all about making physical changes," LaForte reiterated. "Feng shui works so well in this culture because as Americans, we like to make changes like that. It's inspiring."

Other Feng Shui Guidelines

LaForte lists these nine attitudes or practices that make feng shui work:

- ◆ Gratitude (the single most important ingredient) – count your blessings every day.
- ◆ Cultivate intention without expectation – want, visualize clearly, then let it go!
- ◆ Trust your intuition – your instincts are usually correct.
- ◆ Have fun! – find activities that lift your spirit and do them everyday.
- ◆ Give back – praise, a smile, a place in line, an opening in traffic (it doesn't have to be big).
- ◆ Slow down – you miss a lot when you're multi-tasking.
- ◆ Drink lots of water – you're clearer when you're hydrated.
- ◆ Take your shoes off at the door – leave the dust, dirt and worries of the outside world where they belong.
- ◆ Take a walk – remember that we walk on the earth and look to the heavens.

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